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Landmark SC ruling could drive more climate cases
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Sensex, Nifty hit new high; bluechip stocks shine
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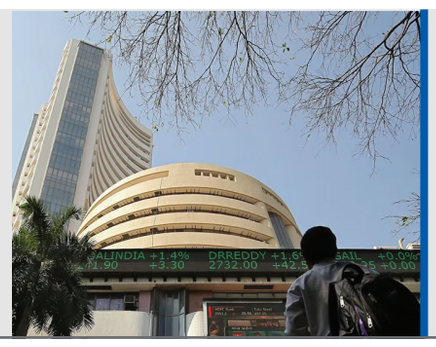

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Prez adds fuel to BJP's 'Emergency' fire

In Parl address, President backs govt on NEET & Budget

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

The President's first address at the 18th Lok Sabha gave fuel to BJP's attack on the Opposition. President Droupadi Murmu stressed the government's unwavering faith in the Constitution and efforts to make it a part of "public consciousness", while slamming the Emergency as the "biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack" on the Constitution.

She said the government is committed to investigating the recent incidents of paper leaks and ensure that the guilty are punished, Murmu said in her address to a joint sitting of Parliament. She said her government is working to create an environment to enable youth of the country dream big and achieve them.

She added that many historic steps and economic decisions will be taken in the upcoming Budget. As she mentioned steps taken by the government on the education front, some Opposition members were heard shouting "NEET".

There were incidents of paper leaks in some states earlier as well, the President said, stressing that there is need to rise above partisan politics and take strong steps at the national level.

She described the poll result as an endorsement of his government's policies while ruing attempts to hurt people's faith in electoral process, including EVMs- an apparent swipe at opposition parties. It is like cutting the very branch on which "we all are sitting", she said. Though she touched upon some of the things promised in the BJP's manifesto like bullet trains and health insurance for senior citizens, there was no mention of a few of the major highlights of the party's promises such as the Uniform Civil Code and one-nation-one-election. The President's speech to Parliament is essentially a government-approved document which outlines its agenda.

"My government does not consider the Constitution of India as just a medium of governance; rather we are making efforts to ensure that our Constitution becomes a part of public consciousness," she added. She added that citizens aged above 70 years will be provided free treatment under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme.

Opposition leaders dubbed the President's address as a "script given by the government" that was "full of lies" and castigated the government over the repeated mention of the 1975 Emergency. —*PTI*

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President Droupadi Murmu addresses the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, in New Delhi, on Thursday ***PHOTO: PTI***

WHAT DID THE PRESIDENT SAY IN PARL?

1. Government committed to giving stringent punishment to those involved in paper leaks
2. Emergency a blot on the Constitution of India
3. Budget 2024 will showcase the government's vision, policies for development will gather pace
4. In this election, Kashmir gave a befitting reply to forces that create unrest during polls
5. North-East a priority for government, it is committed to peace in the region

To back Kejri, AAP boycotts Prez's speech

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

AAP MPs boycotted President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on Thursday to protest against the arrest of party convenor Arvind Kejriwal.

Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal was on Wednesday arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the alleged excise policy scam being probed by it.

MPs of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) boycotted the President's address and claimed it was written by the Central government, while maintaining that they had full respect for her.

They protested against Kejriwal's arrest outside the Parliament and alleged it "was a gross misuse of investigation agencies". They held placards that read 'ED, CBI ka durupyog bandh karo' (stop the misuse of ED, CBI), 'Taanshahi nahi chalegi' (dictatorship will not be allowed), 'Kejriwal ko riha karo' (free Kejriwal), and raised slogans such as 'Prime Minister Jawab do' (answer us, Prime Minister).

"The protest is against dictatorship and to protect the Constitution Chief Minister was arrested," Singh said during the protest. —*PTI*

AAP protests against the Centre over the misuse of CBI and ED at the Parliament House complex, in New Delhi, on Thursday ***PHOTO: PTI***

UN urges India to drop cases against Arundhati Roy

UNITED NATIONS, 27 JUNE

The top UN human rights official on Thursday voiced concern over the use of anti-terror law in India to silence critics and urged authorities to drop cases against author Arundhati Roy over comments on Kashmir. "#India: We are concerned by the use of #UAPA anti-terror law to silence critics. Repeat call for review of law & release of human rights defenders detained under it. Urge authorities to drop cases against" Roy and Sheikh Showkat Hussain over comments on Kashmir," the UN Human Rights Office said on X. Earlier this month, Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena accorded sanction to prosecute Roy Hussain under UAPA for allegedly making provocative speeches at an event in 2010. —*PTI*

After milk, govt to hike curd prices

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) on Thursday announced that they would increase the price of curd by Rs 2, stirring up a controversy. The rule will come into effect shortly. This comes following a recent hike in milk prices. KMF Managing Director MK Jagadish said that the federation plans to raise curd prices by Rs 2, along with an increase in quantity. Speaking to **Salar News**, Jagadish said, "We are yet to see how much extra curd will be produced due to the increase in milk production. Based on the price increase, we will measure the extra curd to be added per packet." He clarified that the curd price hike was delayed due to ongoing discussions on pricing mechanisms.

—*Salar News*

>>>More on Page 2

In UNSC, India junks Pakistan's 'baseless' remarks on Kashmir

UNITED NATIONS, 27 JUNE

India has strongly dismissed and condemned the "baseless" remarks by a Pakistani diplomat on Kashmir during a UN Security Council debate on children and armed conflict, calling it another habitual attempt to divert attention from the "grave violations" against children that continue unabated in Pakistan. "Let me respond briefly in the interest of time to remarks, which were obviously politically motivated and unfounded, made by one representative against my country. I categorically dismiss a these baseless remarks," Chargé d'Affaires R Ravindra, said on Wednesday.—*PTI*

10 Indian fishermen face death row in Lanka

COLOMBO, 27 JUNE

Ten Indian fishermen, arrested for allegedly engaged in illegal fishing in the Sri Lankan waters on Monday, will be charged with the death of a Navy sailor, who was killed in an operation to seize their trawler, authorities here said. A senior sailor from the Navy Special Boat Squadron sustained critical injuries due to "the aggressive manoeuvres of the Indian trawler, resisting its seizure," said a statement issued by the Sri Lankan Navy. "Unfortunately, the senior sailor succumbed to his injuries after being admitted to the Teaching Hospital, Jaffna," it added. —*PTI*

KEMPEGOWDA JAYANTHI

Artistes perform folk dance during an event to celebrate Nadaprabhu Kempegowda's 515th birth anniversary at Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Thursday; Chief Minister Siddaramaiah garlands Kempegowda's statue in front of Vidhana Soudha ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD >>>More on Page 2***

CID files chargesheet against BSY

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

- After the police registered a case of molestation in March this year against the BJP stalwart, Director General of Police Alok Mohan had issued an order transferring it to the CID for further investigation.

The Crime Investigation Department probing molestation charges against former Karnataka chief minister BS Yediyurappa on Thursday filed a chargesheet in the special court dealing with protection of children from of sexual offences (POCSO) cases.

After the Sadashivanagar police here registered a case of molestation in March this year against the BJP stalwart, the Karnataka Director General of Police Alok Mohan had issued an order transferring it to the CID for further investigation.

The case was registered based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl who alleged that he molested her daughter during a meeting on February two this year, at his residence in Dollars Colony here.

Yediyurappa has denied the charge, and said "people would teach a lesson to those indulging in conspiracies against me."

The 54-year-old woman, who had leveled the charge against Yediyurappa, died at a private hospital here last month, due to lung cancer.

The CID questioned Yediyurappa for about three hours on 17 June in connection with the case.

The Karnataka High Court had earlier passed orders restraining the CID from arresting Yediyurappa in the case. —*PTI*

SC issues notice to NTA over NEET OMR sheets

NSUI members protest over the alleged rigging of the NEET UG exam, inside the office of NTA in New Delhi, on Thursday ***PHOTO: PTI***

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the National Testing Agency (NTA) to apprise it whether there is any time limit for raising grievances regarding the OMR sheets provided to the candidates who appeared in NEET-UG 2024.

A vacation bench of Justices Manoj Misra and SVN Bhatti, which issued notice to the NTA on a fresh plea filed by a private coaching centre and few NEET candidates, tagged the petition with the pending matters and listed it for hearing on 8 July. Senior advocate R Basant, appearing for the coaching institute and the candidates, submitted that a few students, who have appeared for the examination, have not got the OMR sheets.

Counsel appearing for the NTA submitted that the OMR sheets have been uploaded on the website and given to the candidates. —*PTI*

'NTA has 25 workers for dozen exams'

Criticising the Centre over the alleged paper leak in NEET-UG, Congress leader Ajoy Kumar claimed that NTA) has less than 25 permanent employees but was conducting over two dozen exams. Kumar alleged the Centre gambled with these competitive examinations by asking the NTA to conduct those. —*PTI*

2 held as CBI makes 1st NEET arrest

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

The CBI on Thursday made its first arrests in the NEET-UG paper leak case, taking two people in custody in Patna, officials said.

Manish Kumar and Ashutosh Kumar allegedly provided safe accommodation to the medical entrance exam aspirants before the examination where they were given leaked question papers and answer keys. Both were produced before a special court in Patna which sent them to judicial custody. Ashutosh had allegedly taken 'Learn Boys Hostel and Play School' in Patna on rent from where the Economic Offence Unit of Bihar Police had recovered half-burnt question papers of NEET they said. —*PTI*

IN SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

MP schools to have chapter on Emergency

BHOPAL, 27 JUNE

A chapter explaining excesses and repression committed during the 1975-77 Emergency in the country and spirited fight by those opposed to the drastic measure will be included in the school curriculum in Madhya Pradesh, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said on Wednesday.

Yadav also announced several additional facilities for "Loktantra Senanis" (democracy fighters) who took part in the struggle against Emergency, whose 50th anniversary was on 25 June.

With an aim of making the present generation aware of the struggle during the Emergency, a lesson on circumstances that prevailed in the country, repression and determination of Loktantra Senanis to oppose the drastic step taken by the then-Congress government will be included in the school curriculum, he said.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said this addition aims to educate students on the period's repression ***PHOTO: PTI***

The Chief Minister was addressing a gathering of those who fought against the Emergency, a 21-month-long period characterised by the suspension of civil liberties, suppression of dissent, and erosion of democratic principles, at his residence in Bhopal.

Yadav said these Loktantra Senanis will be provided the facility of staying in government circuit and rest houses for three days on a discount of 50 per cent in tariff. They will also get relaxation in paying toll on highways.

There will be no delay in payment of expenses incurred by democracy fighters on treatment through their Ayushman health card.

ROAD GOES UNDERGROUND

A road caves in near the Metro construction site close to Arabic College on Tannery Road in Bengaluru on Thursday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Woman, 12 others get 3 years jail for false rape plaint

BELAGAVI, 27 JUNE

Principal District and Sessions Court in Belagavi has sentenced a woman and 12 others to three-and-a-half years in jail for filing a false rape complaint. The case dates back to November 2014, when BV Sindhu, then an employee of Hubballi Electricity Supply Company (HESCOM), accused the then superintending engineer Tukaram Majjige, of rape, threat to life, and incitement to suicide. An initial police report supported her claims. However, after further investigation, it came to light that the initial Malmaruti police report contained fabricated information about rape and threats. Sindhu later admitted to filing a false complaint. In 2017, Majjige filed a case against 13 people, including Sindhu.

—Salar News

Cattle theft gang busted in Chamarajanagar

C'NAGAR, 27 JUNE

Three suspects were arrested for allegedly stealing livestock, including cattle, and sheep in Chamarajanagar district. On 26 June, the Deputy Superintendent of Police of Kollegal arrested three individuals named Fairoz Pasha, Sadiq Pasha and Sabir. The police informed us that they used pickup vans for their thefts. It was revealed that they were not only involved in cattle theft but also in vehicle theft cases. The issue of cattle rustling in the Kollegal and Hanur area was at an alarming level for a long time. "Acting on a tip we conducted the raid and apprehended the accused. We also seized some pickup vehicles, two bikes, two cows and Rs 50,000 cash from them," the police said. A case has been registered at Kollegal police station.

—Salar News

IISc team designs new 3D system to study TB infection

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Researchers from the Department of Bioengineering (BE), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), have designed a novel 3D hydrogel culture system that mimics the mammalian lung environment. It provides a powerful platform to track and study how tuberculosis bacteria infect lung cells and test the efficacy of therapeutics used to treat TB, Bengaluru-based IISc said in a press release. "It is a very old bug, and it has evolved with us quite a bit," says Rachit Agarwal, Associate Professor at BE and corresponding author of the study published in "Advanced Healthcare Materials." 'Mtb' primarily infects the lungs. He and his team have designed a novel 3D hydrogel culture made of collagen, a key molecule present in the extracellular matrix of lung cells. Collagen is soluble in water at a slightly acidic pH. As the pH is increased, the collagen forms fibrils which cross-link to form a gel-like 3D structure. *—PTI*

Delhi Public School takes a stand against drug abuse

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

NCC cadets of Delhi Public School, Bengaluru South took a stand against drug abuse on the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The day began with a solemn pledge led by Headmistress Shobha H, where students vowed to "Say No to Drugs and Yes to Life", followed by an awareness rally organised by the school. NCC cadets marched through Bikasipura Main road to ISRO Layout, raising slogans and educating residents about the dangers of drug use. The school also organised an awareness programme conducted by Kumaraswamy Layout police sub-inspectors Sarthik and Bheemrai Paraki about the consequences of drug usage.

—Salar News

After milk, govt to hike curd prices

Curd prices to go up by ₹2, lassi to be pricey

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) on Thursday announced that they would increase the price of curd by Rs 2, stirring up a controversy. The rule will come into effect shortly. This comes following a recent hike in milk prices. KMF Managing Director MK Jagadish said that the federation plans to raise curd prices by Rs 2, along with an increase in quantity.

Speaking to **Salar News**, Jagadish said, "We are yet to see how much extra curd will be produced due to the increase in milk production. Based on the price increase, we will measure the extra curd to be added per packet." He clarified that the curd price hike was delayed due to ongoing discussions on pricing mechanisms. He assured that other milk products would remain unaffected. "We have normal curd, Nandini Lite, Nandini Dahi (Set Curd), Probiotic curd, Greek yogurt, and other curd-based products. Each product is made differently, and if we can increase their volume, we are considering to adjust the price accordingly," he added.

Reacting to the price hike, an employee at MK Lassi Stall near Shivajinagar, Bengaluru, said, "We have already been hit with the rise in milk prices, and now even curd prices are going to increase. We will observe for a month to see if this new price works out. If not, we might increase the price of lassi by Rs 2 or Rs 4."

Sushma Balaraj, a homemaker residing near Uttarahalli, expressed her frustration: "First it was vegetables, then milk, and now it is curd. Is the government trying to rip us off our daily essentials one by one? How long do we have to suffer through the price hikes?" KMF emphasised that the additional milk and curd volume is a temporary solution due to the seasonal rise in production. *—Salar News*

Monsoon blues: Fish prices rise

Annual monsoon fishing ban to end on 31 July

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Fish lovers in the City are bracing for a season of high prices and limited choices as the annual monsoon fishing ban hits Karnataka's coast.

The ban that started on 1 June will end on 31 July. It has been imposed to facilitate the breeding of fish and the conservation of fish stock.

During this season, mechanised fishing boats are banned from venturing into the sea.

While traditional boats continue fishing, it is unable to meet the high demand from Bengaluru's bustling fish markets. As a result, the City is turning to Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu to fill the gap.

Chennai marine superintendent and boat owner V Balaji told **Salar News** that this dependence on out-of-state supplies will lead to a surge in transportation and storage costs.

"This will make fish pricier. Meanwhile, the prices of crabs, prawns and lobsters will not go up," he said

While the monsoon restricts fishing on the west coast, the east coast remains open for a while, allowing Bengaluru to procure fish from there initially. However, once the fishing ban extends to the east coast later in the season, the City might face double more trouble.

Consumers are forced to adjust their budgets or opt for alternative protein sources during this period.

—Salar News

PRICES

Fish variety	Normal price (per kg)	Price during ban (per kg)
Seer	₹ 800-1500	₹ 1,500-2,000
Barracuda	₹ 650	₹ 1,150
Maithi	₹ 150-200	₹ 250-300
Avla	₹ 250-300	₹ 350-450

2 electrocuted as rain-related deaths touch 6 in M'luru

BENGALURU/ MANGALURU, 27 JUNE

Two autorickshaw drivers were electrocuted after they came into contact with a live electricity wire, which fell from a nearby pole due to heavy rain in Mangaluru, police said on Thursday.

With this, the rain related death toll has increased to six in the last 24 hours in Mangaluru.

The deceased are Raju Gowda, 50, a resident of Alluru in Hassan and Devraj Gowda, 46, from Puttur in Dakshina Kannada.

On Wednesday, four members of a family died when a compound wall of the neighbouring property collapsed on their dwelling in Kuttaru Madaninagar village here following heavy rains, officials said.

In another incident, two children in Mangaluru had a narrow escape when the roof of their house collapsed due to heavy downpour and they were trapped in the mud. Their father saved them.

Dakshina Kannada district administration announced a holiday for schools on Thursday.

In Kodagu, rain wreaked havoc, disrupting normal life. Incidents of landslides were also reported in the district, sources said. The inflow has increased in the Krishna Raja Sagar due to rains.

According to sources, the internal flow of the dam has crossed 3,800 cusec. The water level in the dam has touched 88ft against its holding capacity of 114ft.

India Meteorology Department said 152.9 mm of rain was recorded in Mangaluru in the last 24 hours. Honnavar and Shirali in Uttara Kannada received 75.5 mm and 66.8 mm respectively.

—PTI/Salar News

WORK IN PROGRESS?

Traffic has being diverted at 80 Feet Road at HBR Layout 2nd block in Bengaluru due to road work on Thursday

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

CM TO MEET PM ON 29 JUNE, WILL DISCUSS PROJECTS

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday said he will be meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on 29 June.

This is amid his three-day visit to Delhi to discuss with Union Ministers the Centre's pending approval for State projects

He is likely to meet Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Jal Shakti Minister CR Paatil.

Siddaramaiah, who is left for the national capital on Thursday, convened a meeting of MPs and Union Ministers elected from the State in the national capital to discuss projects related to Karnataka awaiting Centre's nod.

He said several concerned Ministers from the state government will also be coming to Delhi to explain about the projects.

—PTI

FOR CM'S POST

Vokkaliga seer urges CM to step down & make way for DKS

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

Siddaramaiah, DK Shivakumar ***PHOTO: PTI***

A Vokkaliga seer on Thursday publicly urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to step down and make way for his Deputy DK Shivakumar, amid a power tussle within the ruling Congress.

His appeal has come at a time, when there is growing demand within the Siddaramaiah cabinet to have three more Deputy Chief Ministers -- from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities.

Vishwa Vokkaliga Mahasamastana Math seer Kumara Chandrashekaranatha Swamiji raised the pitch for Shivakumar at the Kempegowda Jayanthi event here to commemorate the birth anniversary of Bengaluru's founder, in the presence of both Siddaramaiah and the Deputy Chief Minister on the dais.

Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress President, is a Vokkaliga.

Reacting to a question on the seer's appeal, Siddaramaiah, later speaking to reporters, said: "Congress is a high command party....this is a democracy. We will follow whatever the high command says."

There was stiff competition between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar for the Chief Minister's post after the declaration of Assembly election results in May 2023, and Congress had managed to convince the latter and made him the Deputy Chief Minister.

Meanwhile, Shivakumar mocked demand from some Ministers to create three more posts of Deputy Chief Minister, saying they will get no "solution" by discussing it before the media. *—PTI*

DKS clarifies dropping Deve Gowda, HDK from celebration

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

The move by the State government to exclude former prime minister HD Deve Gowda and his son, Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy, from the birth anniversary celebrations of Bengaluru founder Kempegowda has stirred controversy. Responding to it, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday clarified that it was a misunderstanding.

Speaking to reporters on Kempegowda's 515th birth anniversary on Thursday he said, "There was no intention to disrespect anyone, and the officers should ensure that prominent community leaders are included in the invitation."

He elaborated that the officers followed protocol and the names were inadvertently dropped due to the busy schedules.

He said, "It is all our responsibility to nurture and grow the legacy of Nadaprabhu Kempe Gowda. He took care of all segments of people when he ruled Bengaluru. It is only appropriate that representatives of all communities participate in these celebrations."

Deve Gowda ***PHOTO: PTI***

Acknowledging their roles, he promised that their names would be included.

"Kempegowda is not owned by the Vokkaligas. Kempegowda built Bengaluru City for the welfare of all people. There might be some mistakes, and they will be addressed next time, " he added.

Regarding the controversy, Kumaraswamy said, "Kempegowda does not belong to anyone. He belongs to the State. I got to know that our names were dropped from the invitation. I will not make an issue of this." *—Salar News*

KEMPEGOWDA'S PRISON RUINS FOUND IN KOPPAL

KOPPAL, 27 JUNE

In a significant historical breakthrough, senior history researcher Sharana Basappa Kolkara has unearthed the prison of Kempegowda, Nadaprabhu of Yalahanka and founder of modern Bengaluru, where he was detained. Remains were found at 'Jinjara' Betta near Anegondi village. The discovery sheds light on an important chapter in the history of the Vijayanagara dynasty.

Basappa has confirmed that this site is the exact location of Kempegowda's imprisonment. The top site features defensive walls encompassing wide spaces along with watch towers, guard houses,' quarters, security buildings (prison), and natural water ponds. The strategic location atop a 400-meter hill adds to its secretive nature.

Basappa presented his findings at the 'Vijayanagar Study Symposium', organised by Karnataka's State Department of Antiquities Museums and Heritage during the Hampi festival. *—Salar News*

FILMS, STICKERS IN DEMAND

Fans go gaga over Darshan's prison No. 6106

BENGALURU, 27 JUNE

PHOTO: SALAR

A wave of support has emerged for Kannada actor Darshan, currently lodged in jail under the number 6106. Fans are proudly displaying "Khaidi No. 6106" (Prisoner No. 6106) stickers on their vehicles, even using it as their number plate in some instances.

The trend has gained significant traction online, with Darshan's wife Vijayalakshmi urging fans to remain hopeful for the "D-Boss" to return.

This fervent display of loyalty comes amidst Darshan's arrest in the Renukaswamy murder case. As per prison regulations, inmates are assigned numbers for identification and record-keeping. This unique identifier has become a badge of honour for Darshan's fans.

- This fervent display of loyalty comes amidst Darshan's arrest. As per prison regulations, inmates are assigned numbers for identification and record-keeping. This unique identifier has become a badge of honour for Darshan's fans

Salar News has learnt that many associations are planning to fund sticker shops so that fans can get the customised stickers for free.

The phenomenon has extended to the film industry as well. Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce received multiple requests from producers for film titles inspired by Darshan's case, including 'D Gang', 'Pattangere Shed', and most notably, 'Khaidi No. 6106'. Bhadravathi Movie Makers have submitted an application seeking the title 'Khaidi No. 6106' for their upcoming film. However, the board is deliberating on whether to approve the title or not.

However, this unwavering support has also raised concerns. A video of a young fan discussing Darshan's case sparked outrage. In the video, the boy said that Darshan's fame and success wouldn't necessarily benefit his fans. This led to some fans tracking him down and allegedly harassing him to issue an apology video, in which he retracted his earlier statement. *—Salar News*

Officials foil bid to encroach KRS reservoir land

MANDYA, 27 JUNE

PHOTO: PTI

Responding to a complaint by Mandya villagers, Cauvery Neeravari Nigama Limited (CNNL) officials have foiled an encroachment attempt on the Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) reservoir's backwater area on Thursday. One Nakesh John Mathew from Kerala had allegedly used a JCB to dig a hole and place large stones in the reservoir's land to claim it. Mathew owns four acres in survey number 279 of Chikkamaralli village, in Pandavapura taluk, adjacent to the backwater area. The encroachment was reportedly facilitated with the help of local representatives and politicians.

CNNL Superintending Engineer Raghuraman stated that the encroachment has been halted, and no further work will be done until a joint survey is conducted. Constructed in 1924, across the Cauvery River, KRS reservoir is crucial for irrigation in Mysuru and Mandya districts, supporting millions of farmers.

Recently, Karnataka High Court banned mining within 20km of KRS dam.

—Salar News

PHOTO: ANI

Ex-PM LK Advani discharged from AIIMS

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Veteran BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani, who was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) around 10.30pm on Wednesday night, was discharged on Thursday, a hospital official said. The 96-year-old former deputy prime minister was evaluated by a team of doctors from different specialities including urology and geriatric medicine and is learnt to have undergone a minor procedure. *—PTI*

Atishi discharged from hospital after 2 days

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Delhi Water Minister and AAP leader Atishi was discharged from Lok Nayak Hospital on Thursday, where she was admitted after her health deteriorated during a hunger strike against the water scarcity in the city. Atishi started her indefinite hunger strike, protesting for Haryana to release Delhi's water share on 22 June. She was brought to the hospital on Tuesday, following which the strike was called off. Later that day, AAP MP Sanjay Singh had said that they will continue to raise the issue in Parliament by mobilising the opposition parties. Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Singh said, "Atishi has been on a hunger strike for 5 days. Her health was deteriorating. Doctors had been asking her to break the strike. Her health started worsening yesterday night. Her lowest sugar level was 36. Doctors suggested that she had to be admitted immediately; otherwise, she might lose her life. She was admitted to LNJP at 3.30-4 am in the ICU." *—ANI*

AAP MP Sanjay Singh to enter Parl as suspension ends

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

AAP MP Sanjay Singh received a major relief as his suspension from Rajya Sabha ended on Thursday. He expressed happiness as permission has been obtained to enter Parliament after almost a year of suspension. Speaking to ANI, Sanjay Singh said, "You all know what is happening to us, how the elected Chief Minister has been kept in jail and how he was arrested by CBI on Wednesday...We will definitely boycott the President's address because this is not the President's own statement, rather she reads the government's statement. She reads the written speeches of the government. So that is why we will boycott thePresident's address..." Notably, after obtaining permission to enter the Parliament, Singh along with other AAP MPs held a protest against the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister and AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal, in Parliament premises ahead of President Droupadi Murmu's address. *—PTI*

Woman booked for poll code violation in Thane

THANE, 27 JUNE

A woman was booked who reportedly took selfie with ballot paper while voting in the Maharashtra Legislative Council polls on Wednesday and posting the image on social media. The Ambernath police station official said that based on the complaint of the poll officer, a case was booked against her under Representation of the People Act. She is yet to be arrested and further probe is underway.Voting took place on Wednesday for the biennial elections to four seats of the Maharashtra Legislative Council in Mumbai, Konkan, and Nashik regions. As many as 4.29 lakh voters were eligible to decide the fate of 55 candidates in the Mumbai Graduates, Mumbai Teachers, Nashik Teachers and Konkan Graduates constituencies. *—PTI*

Remove Sengol from Parl to save Constitution: SP MP

MP RK Chaudhary calls it 'Raja ka Danda'

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

The 'Sengol' found its prominence in Parliament on Thursday amid the ongoing political controversy ignited by Samajwadi Party (SP) Member of Parliament (MP) RK Chaudhary's recent comments calling it a symbol of monarchy. Chaudhary asked to remove the Sengol from the house to save the Constitution.

"The Constitution is the symbol of democracy. BJP government, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, installed the Sengol in Parliament. 'Sengol' means 'Raj-Dand' or 'Raja ka Danda'. After ending the princely order, the country became independent. Will the country be run by 'Raja ka danda' or the Constitution? I demand that Sengol be removed from Parliament to save the Constitution," said Chaudhary.

BJP leader CR Kesavan called Chaudhary's comments outrageous and outlandish. "RK Chaudhary's remarks are outrageous and outlandish. He insulted the millions of devotees. He has also undermined the sanctity of the Parliament. He has also abused the office of the President. But what better can you expect from a Samajwadi Party MP," he said.

Sengol is being carried in the presence of President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar in Parliament ***PHOTO: X/@narendramodi***

Union Minister Anupriya Patel asked what were the SP's MP doing when the Sengol was being established in the House. "When Sengol was established, the Samajwadi Party was in the House even then, what were its MPs doing at that time?" she said.

Union Minister BL Verma said that SP leaders should look at the constitution and parliamentary traditions. "Samajwadi Party MPs who are saying this first, should know the parliamentary traditions and then speak. And they are talking about removing something that is a symbol of self-respect. I think that somewhere they should look at the constitution and parliamentary traditions," he said.

RJD MP Misa Bharti said that the Senghol should be removed because it is a democratic country.

"It should be removed because it is a democratic country. The Sengol should be kept in the museum where people can come and see it," Bharti said.

Meanwhile, SP Chief Akhilesh Yadav defended Chaudhary, suggesting that the remark might be a reminder for the Prime Minister. *—ANI*

Nadda appointed Leader of House in Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar informed about the appointment of Union Health Minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief Jagat Prakash Nadda on the first day of the 264th session of the Upper House of Parliament Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also present in the House when the announcement was made.

Nadda replaces Union Minister Piyush Goyal, who was the Leader of the Upper House, and has been elected to Lok Sabha. Nadda assumed charge as Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare on 11 June. He is also the Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers. Nadda, who hails from Himachal Pradesh, served as the Union Health Minister in the BJP-led NDA government from 2014-19. He is a Rajya Sabha MP from Gujarat. The 264th Session of Rajya Sabha commenced today 27 June and will conclude on 3 July. The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha commenced on 24 June and newly-elected members took oath. *—ANI*

JP Nadda ***PHOTO: PTI***

Emergency remark: Rahul meets Birla, raises concerns

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi met Speaker Om Birla on Thursday and voiced his displeasure over the reference to Emergency made by the chair, saying it was "clearly political" and could have been avoided.

It was a courtesy call during which Gandhi also raised the issue of Emergency being invoked by the Speaker in the House, AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal told reporters after the meeting in Parliament House. "It was a courtesy call.

The Speaker declared Rahul Gandhi as the Leader of Opposition and after that he along with other INDIA alliance partner leaders met the Speaker," he said.

Asked whether Gandhi discussed the issue of Emergency being raised in the House, Venugopal said, "We discussed so many things about Parliament functioning. Of course, this issue also came up." "Rahul ji, as Leader of Opposition, informed the Speaker about this issue, and said it could have been avoided from the Speaker's reference. That is clearly a political reference, it could have been avoided," the Congress leader said. *—PTI*

TMC MLAs Rayat Hossain and Sayantika Banerjee stage protest demanding West Bengal Governor to administer swearing-in ceremony ***PHOTO: PTI***

TMC MLAs launch sit-in on Assembly premises

KOLKATA, 27 JUNE

A day after two newly elected TMC MLAs failed to take oath following a row over the venue of the swearing-in ceremony; they launched a dharna on the West Bengal Assembly compound on Thursday.

The MLAs, Sayantika Bandyopadhyay and Rayat Hossain Sarkar, sat before the statue of BR Ambedkar, demanding that Governor CV Ananda Bose enable them to perform the duty of elected public representatives by facilitating the oath-taking ceremony inside the assembly.

Raj Bhavan had earlier invited the two, who were elected to the assembly in recent by-polls, to take the oath at the Governor's House on Wednesday.

However, the TMC claimed that in the case of by-poll winners, the governor assigns the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker of the assembly to administer the oath. The governor refused to hold the programme in the assembly as requested by the two and had gone to New Delhi on 26 June. *—PTI*

6 new MPs take oath as RS members

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Six newly-elected MPs from Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh took oath as members of Rajya Sabha on Thursday. Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar welcomed the new members.

The first among those who took oath was Congress MP Akhilesh Prasad Singh (Bihar), followed by Sarfaraz Ahmad of JMM and Pradip Kumar Varma of the BJP (both Jharkhand). BJP leaders Banshilal Gurjar, Maya Naroliya and Balyogi Umeshnath also took oath as members of the Upper House. They represent Madhya Pradesh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of the House JP Nadda and Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge were present in the House during the oath-taking. *—PTI*

AYODHYA UNDER WATER

The pre-monsoon rain that lashed Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya has resulted in waterlogging in different areas. The UP government has already spent Rs 7,500 crore for 34 projects in Ayodhya and plans to spend Rs 85,000 crore more ***PHOTO: X/@THE_HINDU***

Opposition protest over issues of farmers, NEET

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

Opposition members staged a protest on the premises of the Maharashtra Vidhan Bhavan as the monsoon session of the state legislature commenced here on Thursday.

The protesters, belonging to the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) comprising the Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and NCP (SP), raised slogans against the government over the issues related to farmers and the NEET exam. Several allegations of irregularities have been made in the medical entrance examination, the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) or NEET, conducted by the National Testing Agency in May.

Sitting on the state legislature complex's stairs, the opposition members raised slogans holding placards in their hands. On Wednesday, the opposition alliance boycotted Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's customary tea party on the eve of the session, accusing the government of failing to address issues of the masses. *—PTI*

Uddhav demands complete farm loan waiver

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday demanded from the Maharashtra government a complete waiver of farm loans and its implementation before state assembly polls scheduled later this year. He also termed the monsoon session of the state legislature that commenced as the "send-off" session of the Mahayuti government led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. *—PTI*

M'RASHTRA'S ECONOMY EXPECTED TO GROW BY 7.6%: SURVEY

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

Maharashtra's economy, the top contributor to the national nominal GDP, is expected to expand by 7.6 per cent in 2023-24, similar to the country's projected growth of 7.6 per cent, according to the state's latest Economic Survey. The agriculture and allied activities sector, which was hit by "scarcity situation", in the state is expected to grow by 1.9 per cent and the Industry sector by 7.6 per cent, while the services sector is likely to register an expansion of 8.8 per cent in the last fiscal, it said. The Economic Survey 2023-24 was tabled by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who also handles the finance portfolio, in the Maharashtra legislature monsoon session on Thursday.

As per the key document, the state's gross state domestic product (GSDP) at current prices for 2023-24 has been projected at Rs 40,44,251 crore and real at Rs 24,10,898 crore.

The annual credit plan size for the state's priority sector for 2023-24 is Rs 6.51 lakh crore in which the share of the agriculture and allied activities sector is 25.9 per cent and that of micro, small, medium enterprises and khadi and village industries sector is 55.6 per cent, it said. *—PTI*

HOOCH TRAGEDY

AIADMK holds strike, DMDK lends support

CHENNAI, 27 JUNE

Led by party general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami, AIADMK MLAs and party workers held a hunger strike here on Thursday to press for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy. DMDK chief Premalatha Vijayakanth visited the venue and lent her party's support to the protest.

Clad in black shirts, the AIADMK legislators, who have been suspended from the ongoing Assembly session for disrupting proceedings, began their fast here by 9am at the Rajarathinam stadium. The fast is also to condemn 'denial of permission' to raise the issue in the state Assembly, according to the main Opposition party.

Premalatha Vijayakanth, speaking to reporters at the venue of the fast, backed AIADMK's demand and also demanded that Minister for Prohibition and Excise, S Muthusamy resign from his post to do justice.

She alleged police have not permitted AIADMK leaders to 'make speeches,' (using public address system) and decried 'repression.' Facts related to the hooch tragedy will emerge only if the CBI probed the matter and both the AIADMK and her party DMDK are firm on this stand, she said. She alleged that, "ruling party persons abetted the brewing of illicit arrack." Denouncing suspension of AIADMK MLAs, she demanded that the government specify the norms violated by the opposition party members.

Republican Party of India leader CK Tamilarasan also visited the venue of hungerstrike and extended support.

Palaniswami, in a post on X, demanded Chief Minister MK Stalin's resignation and reiterated that the hooch deaths be investigated by the CBI.

Palaniswami had said on Wednesday that 'denying a honest debate' over the hooch tragedy, that has reportedly left over 60 dead, and suspending AIADMK MLAs was against democracy.*—PTI with agencies*

Adhikari questions 'double standards' in use of Section 144

KOLKATA, 27 JUNE

Senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Thursday expressed surprise at the use of Section 144 CrPC to prevent BJP workers from staging a sit-in at the Raj Bhavan gate, questioning why different standards were applied when TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee held a protest at the same spot in November. Adhikari, the Leader of Opposition in West Bengal assembly, expressed confidence that justice will prevail and pledged to abide by Calcutta High Court's decision, where the case is being heard.

Adhikari's comments came in response to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's assertion that BJP is insisting on holding protests at the same location as Banerjee's sit-in to emulate TMC, claiming they lack a real agenda. Banerjee criticised BJP's attempt to follow TMC's actions and questioned if such rallies would be permitted in Delhi. She also emphasised that her government will not allow the Esplanade area near Victoria House to be blocked by rallies, noting that TMC only holds one programme there annually on 21 July to honour Youth Congress workers killed in the early 90s. *—PTI*

COMMITTEE TO ASSESS

Plea in SC against newly amended criminal law bills

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

A public interest litigation has been moved in the Supreme Court against the newly amended Criminal law bills Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023.

The petitioner has urged the top court to issue a notice seeking specific directions to immediately constitute an expert committee on this to assess, and identify the viability of the three new amended criminal laws named as the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023 with the aim to overhaul the criminal laws of the country and abolish, Indian Penal Code 1860, Code of Criminal Procedure and Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

PHOTO: ANI

The petition has sought to stay the operation and implementation of three new criminal laws Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023. The PIL has been filed by two persons Anjali Patel and Chhaya through advocates Sanjeev Malhotra and Kunwar Siddhartha.

According to the plea, the proposed Bills suffer from many defects and discrepancies. "The above-proposed Bills were withdrawn and new Bills were produced with some changes, these were passed by the Parliament on 21 December 2023 and were published in Gazette Notification on 25th December 2023 and all of them have now assumed the position of an Act," the plea said.

"Because for the first time at such a level changes are been made in criminal laws. The main symbol of colonial rule is the police system which needs reforms," the petition read.

The plea also said the new laws allow up to 15 days of police custody, which can be authorised in parts during the initial 40 or 60 days of the 60 or 90 days period of judicial custody may lead to denial of bail for the entire period if the police have not exhausted the 15 days custody. *—ANI*

₹2,000 cr terminal of Guwahati airport to open in 2025

GUWAHATI, 27 JUNE

The Adani Group-run Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International (LGBI) Airport in Guwahati will move to its upcoming terminal by April 2025, Chief Airport Officer (CAO) Utpal Baruah said.

The initial target to complete the terminal building, being developed at a total cost of over Rs 2,000 crore, was December 2024, but it got delayed by around four months due to a change in design, he said. In August 2020, the Union Cabinet accorded its approval for leasing the Guwahati airport for operation, management and development to Adani group for 50 years.The Airport Authority of India was developing the new terminal before the management was transferred to the Gujarat-based entity. The capacity of the terminal will be 13.1 million passengers per year. *—PTI*

Woman killed, 8 injured in spar over land in Odisha

KENDRAPARA, 27 JUNE

A 52-year-old woman was killed and eight others injured after a long-standing land dispute escalated into a violent clash between two groups at a village in Odisha's Kendrapara district, police said on Thursday. The incident happened in Sangrampur village in Rajkanika police station area on Wednesday afternoon, they said. The deceased has been identified as Sushila Nayak. She died on the spot after being attacked with a wooden plank, they added. All the injured were admitted to the district hospital in Kendrapara. Later, two of them were shifted to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack as their conditions deteriorated, police said. It is suspected that the violence was the result of a property dispute. *—PTI*

Railway board slows down Vande Bharat, Gatiman Express

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

The Railway Board has reduced the speed of semi-high speed trains Gatimaan Express and Vande Bharat from 160 kmph to 130 kmph till the automatic train protection system gets operational. At present, only Gatiman Express and two Vande Bharat trains run at 160 kmph between Hazarat Nizamuddin (New Delhi) and Agra rail route due to suitable track conditions.On 24 June, the Railway Board's executive director (signal) issued a letter to the general manager of NCR zone and said that the issue of speed of these trains was examined. Directing the NCR zone to ensure the instruction, the letter said that the direction of reduction in speed has also been approved by the Railway Board's Member, Infra; Member, Traction and Rolling Stock.*—PTI*

UP: ED attaches assets against bike taxi aggregator

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it has attached fresh assets worth more than Rs 5 crore as part of a money laundering investigation against an Uttar Pradesh-based bike taxi aggregator and its promoters. A provisional order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) has been issued against the company, Hello Ride Limited, its directors, presidents, agents and others, the ED said in a statement. The attached properties, which include agricultural land and plots, are located in Prayagraj, Kanpur and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh. The total value of these properties is Rs 5.35 crore, it said. The ED had earlier frozen properties worth Rs 2.38 crore in this case and the total attachment now stands at Rs 7.73 crore. *—PTI*

Landmark SC ruling could drive more climate cases

200 climate cases from Global South countries are recorded

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

A landmark ruling by the Supreme Court of India which recognised the right against adverse effects of climate change as a distinct fundamental right could drive more climate litigation in the country, according to a global report released on Thursday.

Citing the case of MK Ranjitsinh and Others vs. Union of India, the report by the London School of Economics' Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment said that climate cases in the Global South are increasing and gaining more attention.

The report said that over 200 climate cases from Global South countries are recorded in databases, comprising about 8 per cent of all cases globally. "While research indicates a growing trend in utilising the courts as instruments in climate policy responses in some Global South countries, there may be a strategic avoidance of climate litigation in others," the report said.

For instance, it noted that India's historically low number of climate cases reflects a conscious decision to avoid an overly narrow focus on emissions, as this can overlook broader issues related to livelihoods, rights, and ecological concerns.

"However, there may be a shift following a landmark judgment by the Supreme Court of India," the report added.

The Ranjitsinh case originated from concerns about the impact of overhead power cables on the Great Indian Bustard. The authors analysed a database of 2,666 climate litigation cases compiled by the Sabin Centre for Climate Change Law at Columbia University. Around 70 per cent of these cases have been filed since 2015, the year the Paris Agreement was adopted. In 2023 alone, 233 new cases were filed. *—PTI*

Devotees arrive to offer prayers at the Aluva Shiva Temple amid rain, in Kochi on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

Heavy rains lash Kerala; orange, yellow alerts issued

T'PURAM, 27 JUNE

Heavy rains lashed many parts of Kerala on Wednesday night, prompting authorities to urge people to take utmost care while travelling through hilly and inundated areas.

An orange alert has been issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in seven districts, and a yellow alert in the remaining districts in the state for Thursday. An orange alert means very heavy rain of 11cm to 20cm and a yellow alert means heavy rainfall between 6cm and 11cm.

Heavy rain with maximum surface wind speed up to 40 Kmph is very likely to occur in many places at Kannur, and Kasaragod districts, the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority said on Thursday.

Relief camps have been opened in Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts to accommodate people affected by the floods.

—PTI

Rain in Delhi brings relief from heat

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Heavy rain lashed parts of the national capital on Thursday morning, bringing Delhiites much-needed respite from the heat.

The minimum temperature in Delhi was recorded at 28.6 degrees Celsius, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Delhi has been reeling from sweltering heat. The city has recorded nine heatwave days in June so far as against none in 2023 and 2022. On Wednesday, private weather forecasting agency Skymet Weather Services said the monsoon current could arrive in Delhi by the end of this week, bringing relief from the prevailing sultry conditions. "The monsoon is expected to reach Delhi on 29 or 30 June," Mahesh Palawat of Skymet Weather Services said. *—PTI*

TN govt to set up international airport in Hosur, says MK Stalin

CHENNAI, 27 JUNE

The Tamil Nadu government will set up an international airport on 2,000 acres of land in Hosur with a capacity to handle 30 million passengers a year and to cater the increasing industrial needs in Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts, Chief Minister MK Stalin informed the Assembly on Thursday.

The presence of an airport will help the overall socio-economic development of the region, not just Hosur alone, the chief minister said. "I am pleased to announce in this House that an international airport will be set up on 2,000 acres of land in Hosur, capable of handling 30 million passengers per annum," Stalin said, making the announcement under rule 110 in the Assembly.

It was hailed by various political parties in the House. After the DMK came to power, Tamil Nadu made rapid progress in all sectors and the state moved up to numero uno position in India in the Export Preparedness Index for 2022, he said.

"Tamil Nadu is India's leading state in exports of motor vehicles, ancillaries, leather goods and electronics. From being at the bottom in 2020 in the ranking of states for industrial growth, Tamil Nadu has now become a top performing state," Stalin said and added that efforts were on to transform the state into one trillion US dollar economy by 2030.

Hosur has been attracting more investments in the electronics and electric vehicle manufacturing sector since the last few years. For its part, the state government was implementing various projects aimed at improving the infrastructure in the rapidly growing city of Hosur. Accordingly, a new master plan for Hosur is nearing completion, he said. *—PTI*

MK Stalin *PHOTO: PTI*

WHEN DREAMS MEET REALITY

In a touching story from Varanasi, 9-year-old Ranveer Bharti - who is suffering from brain tumour - was made IPS officer for a day. Additional Director General (ADG) of Police Piyush Mordia shared a video on X, where Bharti was seen wearing a khaki uniform and shaking hands with police personnel. Bharti wants to become an IPS officer *PHOTO: X/@ADGZONEVARANASI*

Arundhati Roy wins PEN Pinter Prize

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Indian author Arundhati Roy has said that she is "delighted" to have been awarded this year's PEN Pinter Prize.

Set up in memory of playwright Harold Pinter, the award is for writers of "outstanding literary merit" who take an "unflinching" look at the world. The announcement comes weeks after officials in India approved action against Roy under anti-terror laws for comments she made 14 years ago. She will receive the PEN Pinter Prize on 10 October in a ceremony co-hosted by the British Library.

On winning the prize, Roy said: "I wish Harold Pinter were with us today to write about the almost incomprehensible turn the world is taking. Since he isn't, some of us must do our utmost to try to fill his shoes."

Roy is a Booker Prize-winning author and has written about human rights issues in India as well as war and capitalism globally. English PEN chair Ruth Borthwick praised Roy for telling "urgent stories of injustice with wit and beauty".

"While India remains an important focus, she is truly an internationalist thinker, and her powerful voice is not to be silenced," Borthwick said. Roy, 62, is an outspoken writer and activist and could face prosecution by the Narendra Modi government for comments she made in 2010 about Kashmir - a controversial topic in India. *—BBC News*

PHOTO: X@DEARTHOFSID

- The announcement comes weeks after officials in India approved action against Roy under anti-terror laws. She will receive the PEN Pinter Prize on 10 October

Woman thrashed in Meghalaya over affair, 6 held

SHILLONG, 27 JUNE

A woman was publicly thrashed by her relatives for having an affair in Meghalaya's West Garo Hills district and a video of the incident went viral on social media The police on Thursday said that six people were arrested in connection with the incident that happened in Lower Teksagre village in Dadenggre sub-division on Tuesday. The woman, a single mother in her mid-20s, was asked to appear before a kangaroo court in her village. Later, she was dragged by her hair by four men and thrashed with sticks in front of a mob that watched. Superintendent of Police Abraham T Sangma told PTI that six persons, all her close relatives, were arrested on Wednesday within hours of the video going viral.

"While two people were picked up by the police from the village, the rest surrendered. They have been brought back to the district headquarters town," he said. The State Women's Commission has also taken suo-moto cognisance of the incident and has sent a team to meet the victim, officials said. *—PTI*

Huge cache of arms recovered in Manipur

IMPHAL, 27 JUNE

The security forces recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunition during search operations conducted in parts of Imphal East and Bishnupur district on Thursday.

The police informed that 11 grenades, six IEDs, five 303 rifles, three detonators, a carbine, one handgun, various types of bombs and ammunition, besides four walkie-talkies and two radio sets were found. The recoveries were made during "search operations and area domination conducted by security forces in the fringe and vulnerable areas of hill and valley districts", the state police said in a statement.

During a search operation at Keinou Maning near the High Canal in Bishnupur district, one SMG carbine, one 9 mm pistol, nine high-explosive grenades, two smoke bombs and different types of ammunition were found, the police said.

In another operation at the hill ranges of Sanasabi Natum Ching in Imphal East district, five .303 rifles, two 12-bore guns, three long-range improvised heavy Mortars, one 9mm Pistol six Improvised Explosive Bombs and other items were recovered.

Meanwhile, the Assam Rifles said that the para-military force in coordination with CRPF and Manipur Police conducted a joint combing operation in Jiribam district on Wednesday after miscreants attempted to torch an abandoned house. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X@OFFICIAL_DGAR

Armed Force jawan shoots self in Ch'garh

BIJAPUR, 27 JUNE

An Armed Force jawan of Chhattisgarh was critically wounded after he shot himself with his service rifle in an apparent suicide bid on Thursday.According to police, the incident took place in the wee hours when constable, Manoj Dinkar, was inside his barrack in the camp of CAF in Rampuram village under Bhopalpatnam police station. As per information, Dinkar, belonging to the 15th battalion of the CAF, turned the weapon on himself and shot himself, leaving him seriously injured. He was rushed to a local hospital, from where he was shifted to Jagdalpur for further treatment. No suicide note found at the spot. *—PTI*

COUPLE BLACKMAILED

Civil services aspirant turns burgler

DURG, 27 JUNE

A 28-year-old man, who aspired to get a government job but failed to clear any civil services exams despite multiple attempts, tried to extort Rs 10 lakh from a couple after he happened to shoot their intimate video at their place in Durg district of Chhattisgarh, police said.

The accused, Vinay Kumar Sahu, had gone to the couple's house early last month with the intention of burglary, but instead of stealing anything, he recorded the couple's intimate moments using his mobile phone and demanded money from them for not making their video public, they said.

The accused was arrested on 25 June based on the complaint lodged by the couple, residents of Ahiwara village located in the Nandini police station area, Sub Divisional Officer of Police (Dhamdha) Sanjay Pundhir said.

"On 17 June, the male victim complained to the police that he received a video clip on their WhatsApp from an unknown number that showed him and his wife in an intimate moment. The man also told the police that some unidentified person called him and demanded Rs 10 lakh for not releasing the clip on social media," he said.

A joint team of Nandini police and Anti-Crime and Cyber Unit was constituted to probe the matter. Police zeroed in on the accused based on technical evidence and CCTV footage, and arrested him, he said.

Three mobile phones and as many SIM cards were recovered from the possession of the accused, he said. Sahu is a resident of Ahiwara. After completing his bachelors in engineering, he was preparing for civil services. He tried to secure a government job and appeared for various exams, including state Public Service Commission, but failed to clear it every time, Pundhir said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

- The accused was arrested on 25 June based on the complaint lodged by the couple, residents of Ahiwara village located in the Nandini police station area, Sub Divisional Officer of Police said

Thane launches drive to raze illegal bars and pubs

THANE, 27 JUNE

The civic body in Maharashtra's Thane city launched a drive to pull down illegal bars and pubs on Thursday, a day after Chief Minister Eknath Shinde gave directions to this effect in the wake of an incident of alleged consumption of drugs at a similar establishment in Pune, officials said.

Till noon, the Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) razed at least five such illegal establishments in different localities of the city, an official said. On Wednesday, Shinde directed the municipal and police commissioners of Thane and neighbouring Mira Bhayandar township to pull down and bulldoze all illegal bars and pubs as well as properties engaged in drug-related activities in their jurisdictions. As per his directions, TMC commissioner Saurabh Rao launched the demolition drive. The Thane civic body's spokesperson said the drive will continue throughout the city as per the directives of the chief minister.

Police personnel have been deployed in large numbers in view of the action. Bulldozers and JCB machines are engaged in the operation. Shinde has said the consumption of narcotic drugs was leaving a bad impact on the younger generation and in order to curb it, stringent measures need to be taken. *—PTI*

BIHAR BRIDGES BUILT TO COLLAPSE

A bridge caved in at Kishanganj district on Thursday in the fourth incident of its kind in Bihar in just over a week. These accidents have led to questions being raised on the quality of public works in the state. The 70m-long and 12m-wide bridge was built in 2011 over Madiya, a small tributary that connects Kankai river to the Mahananda. Heavy rainfall led to rise in the water level. One of the pillars of the bridge allegedly caved in after it could not withstand the strong current. Three incidents of bridge collapse were reported last week from Araria, Siwan and Araria districts
PHOTO: PTI

Climate change-fuelled heat affects women most

"It's all about survival," says Majida Begum, her face wreathed in sweat as she sifts through waste in Delhi's Seemapuri area, echoing as it were the everyday struggles of millions of women in India facing the brunt of the twin crises of heat and humidity.

As climate change tightens its grip over the globe, a study by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation shows that female-headed households in rural areas on average lose 8 per cent more of their income due to heat stress compared to male-headed households.

While men have moved on to secondary and tertiary sectors due to improved skills, women remain in unorganised sectors characterised by repetitive and labour-intensive tasks, explained Seema Bhaskaran, gender lead at the NGO Transform Rural India,

And Majida is living testament of it all.

Spending hours beneath a makeshift shelter of four slender sticks and a torn bedsheet, the asphalt radiating heat from the sharp sun and high humidity, as she does her day's job, the 65-year-old ragpicker is weather-beaten and old beyond her years.

With beads of sweat tracing paths down her lined face, she walks to a community water tank located around a hundred metres away. She ducks her head beneath the tap, letting the water cascade over her. Refreshed, for the moment, she returns to her sorting in the oppressive heat.

This ritual is a necessity for Majida and others like her amid the unbearable conditions of their work – the absence of sufficient drinking water, toilets, sunshades and prolonged exposure to the elements.

Majida's husband, 70, and immobile, relies entirely on her earnings. Their estranged son offers no support. On good days, she earns Rs 250 for separating recyclables from the waste stream, but when illness strikes and she cannot work, they are left with virtually nothing.

"Whether we eat at night depends on whether I work during the day," Majida said.

Women sell bangles at roadside on a hot summer day at Sundar Nagari, in New Delhi
PHOTO: PTI

"This is the hottest summer I have experienced in many years. The heat made me unwell, and I could not work for 15 days. I am a heart patient, but I cannot afford to stay at home," she said.

In urban agglomerations and in rural India, climate change-fuelled extreme heat is making women from marginalised communities and poor households more vulnerable to economic and health loses.

Women already earn 20 per cent less than men on average, according to the International Labour Organisation, and this gap is further widened due to heatwaves.

In an unprecedented summer, where the heat index has crossed 50 degrees Celsius in many places, the stories are many.

Basanti Nag, 28, from Kokawada village in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, said the summer this year caused nausea and lethargy never experienced before, and the problem was amplified for women who had to travel longer distances to fetch water.

In Dantewada district, Mangaldai's family of three depends on the labour-intensive task of collecting and selling mahua flowers in the peak summer months.

"This year, there has been less mahua work than ever before, with almost half the amount compared to previous years. As a result, my income will also be halved," Mangaldai said.

Mahua is a major non-timber forest produce and a primary source of income for many in the country's tribal areas.

"In agriculture, women perform back-breaking operations like sowing, transplanting, and harvesting without any mechanisation. Excessive heat leads to exhaustion, dehydration, and an increased risk of urinary infections. Women workers in tea estates, street vendors, and safai sathis are exposed to direct sunlight, affecting their productivity and health. Home-based workers also see their income impacted as they juggle household tasks and work, leading to a loss of income," Bhaskar told PTI.

For women, sustenance tasks like fetching water, fuelwood, and fodder take longer in extreme heat. Pregnant women face risks of stillbirth. Care work increases with rising illnesses, leading to further loss of employment and economic participation, she added.

A survey conducted by Greenpeace India and the National Hawkers' Federation revealed that seven out of eight women street vendors in Delhi experienced high blood pressure during heatwaves in April and May, while women in the middle age group raised concerns about delays in their menstrual cycles due to the extreme heat.

All the women who participated in the survey mentioned that sleeplessness during the night is common due to increased heat, and this results in exhaustion throughout the day.

Back in Delhi's Seelampur, 30-year-old Saira has shifted from waste segregation to house cleaning because the punishing heat impacted her income.

"I would often fall ill during summers because of the heat. There was no steady income even after working long hours among the mounds of trash emanating intolerable stench," Saira, who is raising her daughters aged six and 11 alone after the in-laws "rejected" her, told PTI.

The heat is making their already difficult daily life worse. Amid the lack of cooling in her cramped single room home with no windows, the children often fall ill.

"My employers have already warned me against taking frequent leaves. But since I am the only caregiver for my children, I have to take leave from work in such situations," she said.

In the city's Sundernagari slum, Radha Koli faces a similar predicament. She works as a domestic help to feed her family of five, including three daughters and her husband. The relentless heat made her youngest daughter, 10, sick forcing Radha to stay home for a few days which resulted in a pay cut. "We are barely able to afford food and shelter with the Rs 3,500 I earn working at two houses. We do our best to keep illness away, but this heat is taking a toll on all poor families," Koli said.

Experiencing one of its hottest summers, the country has recorded more than 40,000 suspected heat stroke cases and more than 100 heat-related deaths.

According to IMD, around 40 per cent of the country recorded double the number of heatwave days than it usually does in the April to June period. *—PTI*

LETTERS

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SALAR ساہر

'LS poll results show India is not Hindu Rashtra'

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has asserted the recent Lok Sabha poll results point to the fact that India is not a 'Hindu Rashtra'.

He also expressed displeasure that keeping people behind bars "without trial" has continued in the country since the British rule and it is more in practice under the BJP government in comparison to Congress regime.

"That India is not a Hindu Rashtra only has been reflected in the election results," Sen told a Bengali news channel at the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport here.

The 90-year-old economist arrived in Kolkata from the US on Wednesday evening.

"We always hope to see a change after every election. Some of what happened earlier (during BJP-led Central government) like putting people behind bars without trial, and widening the gap between the rich and poor, are still continuing. That must stop," he said.

The eminent economist said there is a need to be politically open-minded, especially when India is a secular country with a secular Constitution.

"I do not think the idea of turning India into a Hindu Rashtra is appropriate," Sen said.

He was also of the opinion that the new Union Cabinet is "a copy of the earlier one".

"The ministers continue to hold similar portfolios. Despite a slight reshuffle, the politically powerful are still powerful," he said.

Sen recalled that during his childhood when India was under the British rule, people were jailed without any trial.

Amartya Sen, a Nobel Prize-winning economist and philosopher, expressed displeasure that people are kept behind bars 'without trial'
PHOTO: PTI

> **The ministers continue to hold similar portfolios. Despite a slight reshuffle, the politically powerful are still powerful**
>
> -Amartya Sen, Nobel laureate

"When I was young, many of my uncles and cousins were put in jail without trial. We had hoped that India would be free from this. Congress is also to blame for the fact that this did not stop. They didn't change it... But, this is more in practice under the present government," the Nobel laureate said.

On the BJP losing Faizabad Lok Sabha seat despite building the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Sen said attempts were made to overshadow the country's true identity.

"... Building the Ram Temple spending so much money... to portray India as a 'Hindu Rashtra' should not have happened in the country of Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. It shows an attempt to neglect India's true identity, and it must change," he said.

- Asked He also expressed displeasure that keeping people behind bars "without trial" has continued in the country since the British rule and it is more in practice under the BJP government in comparison to Congress regime. He was also of the opinion that the new Union Cabinet is "a copy of the earlier one".

Sen also said that unemployment was on the rise in India, and sectors like primary education and primary healthcare were being neglected. *—PTI*

On BJP losing Faizabad Lok Sabha seat despite building the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Amartya Sen said attempts were made to overshadow the country's true identity
PHOTO: PTI

Kenya—Africa's most stable democracy—has long history of violence

Kenya's President came to power by appealing to the common people, describing himself as a "hustler" and vowing relief from economic pain.

But when he was forced to give up on a controversial tax hike that led to deadly chaos in the capital, Nairobi, it was a clear sign that support for him has turned.

Protesters who opposed a law that would have raised taxes stormed parliament on Tuesday, burning part of the building as lawmakers fled. Bodies lay in the streets, and medical workers and watchdogs said police had opened fire. The military was deployed.

President William Ruto pushed the law through Parliament despite opposition from the youth-led protest movement, and called protesters "treasonous" after they stormed Parliament.

But on Wednesday, with troops in the capital's streets and the smell of tear gas lingering in the air, he conceded that the plan had caused "widespread dissatisfaction" and said he would not sign the bill.

Here's a look at the unrest in East Africa's most stable democracy and the most serious assault on Kenya's government in decades.

From internet data to diapers

The finance bill was meant to raise or introduce taxes or fees on a range of daily items and services including internet data, fuel, bank transfers and diapers. Some measures were stripped as anger grew. The proposals was part of the Kenyan government's efforts to raise an extra $2.7 billion in domestic revenue.

The government said the changes were necessary to pay interest on national debt, reduce the budget deficit and keep the government running. Protesters saw them as punitive, since the high cost of living already makes it hard to get by.

A 2023 finance bill signed into law by Ruto was also unpopular, featuring a tax on salaries for housing, but the anger was nothing like this.

A youth-led protest

Young Kenyans have been organizing on social media, organizing peaceful street demonstrations meant to force authorities to drop this finance bill altogether. The protests started on June 18 after the bill was made public for the first time.

The protests began in Nairobi but have spread to other parts of Kenya, including the Indian Ocean city of Mombasa and even in Eldoret, a town in the Rift Valley region that's been a bastion of support for the president.

Protesters hide behind a banner as police fire teargas at them during a protest over proposed tax hikes in a finance bill in downtown Nairobi
PHOTO: PTI

Kenya's political opposition stormed out of Tuesday session's in which the bill was passed.

Kenya has seen protests in the past, but activists and others warned the stakes were now more dangerous.

"We are dealing with a new phenomenon and a group of people that is not predictable," said Herman Manyora, an analyst and professor at the University of Nairobi. "We don't know whether these people will fear the army."

Deadly violence

Ruto deployed police and soldiers to quell the protests, infuriating demonstrators and escalating the situation. At least 22 people were killed on Tuesday, the Kenya National Human Rights Commission said, and police were accused of some shooting deaths. Chairperson Roseline Odede said 50 people were arrested.

Ruto acknowledged there were deaths, without elaborating, called it an "unfortunate situation" and offered condolences. He also said about 200 people were wounded in the chaos.

The President is questioned

Ruto, elected in 2022, has consistently urged all Kenyans to pay their fair share of taxes. Some Kenyans now mock him as "Zakayo," after the biblical tax collector Zacchaeus. Many see his aggressive stance as a form of dictatorship that's out of sync with the realities of ordinary people.

In 2023, after the courts blocked some of his tax proposals, the president threatened to disregard court orders. That drew criticism from the Law Society of Kenya, whose leader accused Ruto of seeing himself as above the law.

Pro-democracy activists have warned that Ruto's attacks on the judiciary indicate an authoritarian streak. Some see similarities between Ruto and his mentor Daniel arap Moi, the former president who led Kenya during a long period of one-party rule.

- Ruto in his presidential campaign called himself the anti-establishment candidate and vowed to implement policies to put more money in Kenyans' pockets. But the so-called "hustlers" who supported him were dismayed when his government removed crucial fuel and maize flour subsidies. Many Kenyans saw it as a betrayal. Ruto, now fabulously wealthy, frequently urges Kenyans to tighten their belts.

Common man, chartered plane

Ruto in his presidential campaign called himself the anti-establishment candidate and vowed to implement policies to put more money in Kenyans' pockets.

But the so-called "hustlers" who supported him were dismayed when his government removed crucial fuel and maize flour subsidies. Many Kenyans saw it as a betrayal.

Ruto, now fabulously wealthy, frequently urges Kenyans to tighten their belts. But his state visit to the United States in May created controversy when he chartered a luxury private jet instead of using the presidential jet or Kenya's national carrier.

Ruto later said the chartered jet had been paid for by friends he didn't name. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Women's rights issue will be raised with Taliban: UN

UNITED NATIONS, 27 JUNE

The UN political Chief who will chair the first meeting between Afghanistan's Taliban rulers and envoys from about 25 countries answered sharp criticism that Afghan women have been excluded, saying Wednesday that women's rights will be raised at every session. Undersecretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo stressed to a small group of reporters that the two-day meeting starting on Sunday is an initial engagement aimed at initiating a step-by-step process with the goal of seeing the Taliban "at peace with itself and its neighbours and adhering to international law," the UN Charter, and human rights. This is the third UN meeting with Afghan envoys in Qatar's capital, Doha, but the first that the Taliban are attending. *—AP*

2 killed, 20 injured as rain lashes Pak's Balochistan

BALOCHISTAN, 27 JUNE

At least two people were killed, and 20 sustained injuries due to heavy rains in Dera Bugti in Pakistan's Balochistan district, ARY News reported on Thursday. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), in its report, revealed that the rain-related incidents claimed lives in the Sui area of Dera Bugti. One of the injured people is critical, according to ARY News. Following heavy rains, an emergency was declared in the hospitals in the area, to treat the injured people. Maximum areas in Dera Bugti district of Balochistan were without electricity due to the collapse of several electricity poles. According to the report, Pakistan Army and PDMA have initiated a rescue effort , and people have been relocated to safer locations. *—ANI*

Technical snag delays Sunita's return to Earth

WASHINGTON, DC, 27 JUNE

Two NASA astronauts Barry Wilmore and Sunita Williams have no planned date to return to Earth and they are waiting aboard the International Space Station (ISS) amid several mechanical issues with Boeing's Starliner spacecraft, ABC News reported. The two NASA astronauts were scheduled to return on 14 June. However, the pair has no set date to return to Earth as their return has been delayed multiple times. In a statement, Steve Stich, manager of NASA's Commercial Crew Program, said, "We are taking our time and following our standard mission management team process," according to ABC News report on 5 June. *—ANI*

England's doctores begin strike over pay dispute

LONDON, 27 JUNE

Thousands of doctors in England are staging their 11th walkout in a long-running dispute with the government over pay and working conditions. The move has disrupted hospital services just days before the UK general election. The five-day strike by junior doctors — those in the early years of their careers — shines a spotlight on the troubles besetting the chronically underfunded National Health Service, Britain's state-funded public health system, a topic that is a a top concern for voters going to the polls on 4 July. Junior doctors have been locked in the pay dispute with the government since late 2022. They went on strike for six days in January — the longest in NHS history — and hospitals had to cancel tens of thousands of appointments and operations. *—AP*

Will look forward to India's probe: US on Pannun murder

Indian national Nikhil Gupta is accused in murder plot

WASHINGTON, DC, 27 JUNE

The US says it will look forward to the results of the investigation being conducted by India into the alleged plot to kill India-designated terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

While addressing a press briefing, Miller noted that they have raised the issue with the Indian government and told them that the US expects full investigation into the matter.

Asked about the US State Department's response after the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee wrote a letter to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken calling for a strong diplomatic response on the Indian government's involvement in the assassination attempt on Pannun, Miller responded, "So, we will respond to those members privately, as we always do. I won't speak to that here. But as pertains to the other issue, when this issue first arose, we made clear that we had raised it with the Government of India and told them that we expected there to be a full investigation. They have announced that they are conducting an inquiry, and we will look forward to the results of that inquiry."

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun is an India-designated terrorist who holds American and Canadian citizenship. *PHOTO: PTI*

Indian national Nikhil Gupta is accused of being involved in the alleged failed murder plot of India-designated pro-Khalistani terrorist Pannun. Earlier this month, he was extradited from the Czech Republic to the US to stand trial, NBC News reported.

The US Justice Department has alleged that Gupta, 52, is an associate of the Indian government and that together they and others helped plot the assassination of Pannun in New York City, NBC News reported.

- Indian national Nikhil Gupta is accused of being involved in the alleged failed murder plot of India-designated pro-Khalistani terrorist Pannun

Pannun is an India-designated terrorist who holds American and Canadian citizenship. Earlier in November, the US Justice Department unsealed an indictment against an Indian national for his alleged involvement in a foiled plot to assassinate a US-based leader of the Sikh Separatist Movement and a citizen in New York.

India in November last year formed a high-level inquiry committee to address the security concerns highlighted by the US government. The Ministry of External Affairs said that India takes such inputs seriously since they impinge on national security interests as well, and relevant departments were already examining the issue. *—ANI*

23 KILLED IN PROTESTS

Kenyan President withdraws 'controversial' bill

NAIROBI, 27 JUNE

William Ruto *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Kenyan President William Ruto on Wednesday withdrew the controversial bill to raise taxes that led to massive violent protests nationwide in which 27 people died, CNN reported. Ruto's decision not to sign the finance bill came after violent clashes erupted in the country.

"Having reflected on the continuing conversation regarding the content of the finance bill 2024, and listening keenly to the people of Kenya who have said loudly that they want nothing to do with this Finance Bill 2024, I concede, and therefore I will not sign the 2024 finance bill," Ruto said during a television address Wednesday. "The people have spoken," Ruto said. "Following the passage of the bill, the country experienced widespread expression of dissatisfaction with the bill as passed, regrettably resulting in the loss of life, the destruction of property and desecration of constitutional institutions."

However, despite Ruto accepting their key demand of scrapping the bill, the protesters in Kenya say they will go ahead with a "One Million People March" on Thursday.

A poster was widely shared on social media, calling on people across all generations to return to the streets across the country. Kenya, a nation often praised for its stability, has been seeing escalating protests over the bill, which the government introduced to rein in public debt. The protests turned deadly on Tuesday when security forces fired tear gas and live ammunition at protesters. At least 23 people died in the violence, according to Kenya's Police Reforms Working Group a civil society organisation." *—ANI*

Bolivian General Juan Jose Zuniga is presented following his arrest by the authorities for a coup attempt in La Paz, Bolivia *PHOTO: X/@ SALMAN AHMAD*

Bolivian General held on live TV after coup attempt

LA PAZ, 27 JUNE

Bolivian general Juan José Zúñiga has been arrested and was accused of mounting a coup against the government after attempting to storm the presidential palace on Wednesday.

Led by a top general vowing to "restore democracy," armoured vehicles rammed the doors of Bolivia's government palace on Wednesday in what the President called a coup attempt, then quickly retreated — the latest crisis in the South American country facing a political battle and an economic crisis.

Within hours, the nation of 12 million people saw a rapidly moving scenario in which the troops seemed to take control of the government of President Luis Arce. He vowed to stand firm and named a new army commander, who immediately ordered the troops to stand down.

Soon the soldiers pulled back, along with a line of military vehicles, ending the rebellion after just three hours. Hundreds of Arce's supporters then rushed the square outside the palace, waving Bolivian flags, singing the national anthem and cheering.

The soldiers' retreat was followed by the arrest of Army Chief General Juan José Zúñiga, after the Attorney General opened an investigation. Government Minister Eduardo del Castillo said that in addition to Zúñiga, former navy Vice Adm. Juan Arnez Salvador was taken into custody.

Late Wednesday, Defense Minister Edmundo Novillo said "everything is now under control." Surrounded by the new military chiefs appointed by Arce, Novillo said that Bolivia lived a "failed coup."

The clashes have paralysed the government's efforts to deal with the economic crisis. For example, Morales' allies in Congress have consistently thwarted Arce's attempts to take on debt to relieve some of the pressure. *—AP*

Assange's actions put people in danger: US

WASHINGTON, DC/ MELBOURNE, 27 JUNE

The US State Department said that WikiLeaks founder and whistleblower Julian Assange's actions had put the lives of people, especially Washington's allies and diplomats, at risk.

US State Department Mathew Miller also pointed that Assange served as a "conduit" for Russian intelligence interfering in the US presidential elections.

Assange arrived in Australia on Wednesday after pleading guilty of violating US espionage law, in a deal that set him free of the 14-year legal case.

He arrived to a grand welcome in Canberra, as cheers erupted from his supporters gathered at Canberra Airport in the Australian capital. Assange hugged his wife Stella and waved at his supporters.

Meanwhile, Stella Assange thanked the spectrum of lawmakers who campaigned for her husband, WikiLeaks founder Julian, to be freed during her visit Thursday to Australia's Parliament House, where political leaders differed over how welcome the convicted felon was in his homeland. But while Australian lawmakers largely agreed that the time had come for Assange to be brought home, they disagreed on whether he deserved the same level of support as Australians recently released from arbitrary detention in China, Iran and Myanmar thanks to government intervention.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has been credited with the diplomatic coup that enabled Assange to be released from a London prison to travel to Northern Mariana Islands, a US commonwealth in the Western Pacific where he pleaded guilty to a single charge under the Espionage Act. *—AP/ ANI*

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange gestures after landing at RAAF air base Fairbairn in Canberra, Australia, on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

SUSPECTED HOUTHI ATTACK TARGET SHIP

DUBAI, 27 JUNE

A ship travelling through the Red Sea on Thursday reported being hit in an attack likely carried out by Yemen's Houthi rebels, a private security firm said, the latest in the campaign targeting shipping over the Israel-Hamas war.

The ship issued a radio call off the coast of the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, saying it had been struck, the private security firm Ambrey said.

A warship in the area was responding to the attack, Ambrey added.

It wasn't clear if anyone was hurt or if the ship was damaged in the assault on the vessel. Neither the British nor the US militaries immediately reported the attack.

The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack. However, it can take hours or even days for them to acknowledge their assaults.

The rebels have targeted more than 60 vessels by firing missiles and drones in their campaign that has killed a total of four sailors. *—AP*

'Congo conflict worsens with increase in sexual violence'

UNITED NATIONS, 27 JUNE

The decades-old conflict in Congo's mineral-rich east has "drastically deteriorated" since early 2022, and gotten even worse since last October, with sharp increases in sexual violence, the number of wounded, and child recruitment, the top Red Cross official in the country said on Wednesday. Eastern Congo has struggled with armed violence as more than 120 groups fight for power, land and valuable mineral resources. *—AP*

Two Iranian candidates drop out of presidential election

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, 27 JUNE

Two candidates in Iran's presidential election withdrew from the race as the country prepared Thursday for the upcoming vote, an effort by hard-liners to coalesce around a unity candidate in the polls to replace the late President Ebrahim Raisi. Amirhossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, 53, dropped his candidacy and urged other candidates to do the same "so that the front of the revolution will be strengthened," the state-run IRNA news agency reported late Wednesday night.

Ghazizadeh Hashemi served as one of Raisi's vice presidents and as the head of the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs. He ran in the 2021 presidential election and received some 1 million votes, coming in last place.

On Thursday, Tehran Mayor Alireza Zakani also withdrew, as he did previously in the 2021 election in which Raisi was voted into office.

Iran's theocracy under Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has maintained its stance of not approving women or anyone urging radical change to the country's government for the ballot. However, Khamenei in recent days has called for a "maximum" turnout in the vote, while also issuing a veiling warning to Pezeshkian and his allies about relying on the United States. After the promise nearly a decade ago of Tehran's nuclear deal opening up Iran to the rest of the world, Iranians broadly face crushing economic conditions and a far more uncertain Middle East that already has seen the Islamic Republic directly attack Israel for the first time. *—AP*

- Ghazizadeh Hashemi served as one of Raisi's vice presidents and as the head of the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs

IN THE RACE

Keir Starmer, Sunak's strong opponent

LONDON, 27 JUNE

Dutiful, managerial, a bit dull — Keir Starmer is no one's idea of a firebrand politician.

The Labour Party hopes that is just what Britain wants and needs after 14 turbulent years of Conservative rule. Starmer, the centre-left party's 61-year-old leader, is the current favourite to win the country's 4 July election.

Born in 1963, Starmer is the son of a toolmaker and a nurse who named him after Keir Hardie, the Labour Party's first leader. One of four children, he was raised in a cash-strapped household in a small town outside London.

Starmer has spent four years as Opposition leader dragging his social democratic party from the left towards the political middle ground. His message to voters is that a Labour government will bring change — of the reassuring rather than scary kind.

"A vote for Labour is a vote for stability — economic and political," Starmer said after Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called the election on 22 May.

- Starmer was a strong opponent of Britain's decision to leave the European Union, though now says a Labour government would not seek to reverse it

Keir Starmer *PHOTO*: X@*REAL_SHIRELASS*

If opinion polls giving Labour a consistent double-digit lead are borne out on election day, Starmer will become Britain's first Labour prime minister since 2010.

He loves soccer — still plays the sport on weekends — and enjoys nothing more than watching Premier League team Arsenal over a beer in his local pub. He and his wife Victoria, who works in occupational health, have two teenage children they strive to keep out of the public eye.

He entered politics in his 50s and was elected to Parliament in 2015. He often disagreed with party leader Jeremy Corbyn, a staunch socialist, at one point quitting the party's top team over disagreements, but agreed to serve as Labour's Brexit spokesman under Corbyn. Starmer promised "a culture change in the Labour Party."

Starmer was a strong opponent of Britain's decision to leave the European Union, though now says a Labour government would not seek to reverse it. *—AP*

North Korea claims of multi-warhead missile test

SEOUL, 27 JUNE

North Korea on Thursday said that it had successfully tested a multi-warhead missile in the first known launch of a developmental weapon coveted by leader Kim Jong Un to overwhelm US and South Korean missile defences.

South Korea quickly dismissed the claim as deception to cover up a failed launch.

North Korea's state media said the launch Wednesday tested the separation and guidance control of individual mobile warheads to ensure the capability of the Multiple Independent Reentry Vehicles.

It said the separated warheads "were guided correctly to the three coordinate targets" and a decoy that separated from the missile was verified by radar.

If confirmed, it would be North Korea's first public launch event related to the development of a multiwarhead missile, though at a preliminary stage.

South Korea's military said later Thursday that a joint analysis by South Korean and US authorities assessed that the North Korean missile launch failed.

Joint Chiefs of Staff Spokesperson Lee Sung Joon told reporters that the separation of warheads in MIRV tests happens in descending stages but the North Korean missile exploded in the initial stage of its flight. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 13 paise to close at 83.44 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

The rupee appreciated 13 paise to settle at 83.44 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, supported by a positive trend in equity markets and favourable domestic macroeconomic profile. Forex traders said the strength of the American currency in the overseas market and US dollar demand from oil marketing companies capped sharp gains for the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.56 and hit the intraday high of 83.43 against the greenback during the session.It finally settled at 83.44 against the dollar, registering a gain of 13 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 14 paise against the US dollar and settled at 83.57. The Indian rupee appreciated on bond-related foreign inflows ahead of their inclusion in the JP Morgan debt index, said Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.—*PTI*

Gold falls ₹120; silver remains flat at ₹90,600 per kg

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Gold prices fell Rs 120 to Rs 72,180 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday in line with weak trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had settled at Rs 72,300 per 10 grams in the previous session. However, silver prices remained flat at Rs 90,600 per kg. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) quoted at Rs 72,180 per 10 grams, down by Rs 120 from the previous close," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,305 per ounce, down USD 11 from the previous close.Gold traded lower in the early trade due to stronger rupee and risk-on sentiments, Parmar said. However, silver remained flat at USD 28.94 per ounce. —*PTI*

Vedanta to financially back trans employees' edu

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Globally diversified natural resources company Vedanta Ltd on Thursday announced a policy that will provide financial support to its transgender employees for higher education. The policy entails financial support of up to Rs 1 lakh for professional education and is geared towards transgender individuals who have been associated with Vedanta for at least 18 months, the company said in a statement."By investing in their professional growth, we aim to create an environment that is equal, and champions the well-being and personal development of each and every employee," Priya Agarwal Hebbar, Director of Vedanta Ltd and Chairperson of Hindustan Zinc Ltd, said. Central Electricity Authority organised awareness prog for school students. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA), under the Ministry of Power and National Federation of Engineers for Electrical Safety (NFEES), organised an awareness programme for school students, a statement said.—*PTI*

Sensex, Nifty hit new high; bluechip stocks shine

The Nifty ended at a fresh record high of 24,044

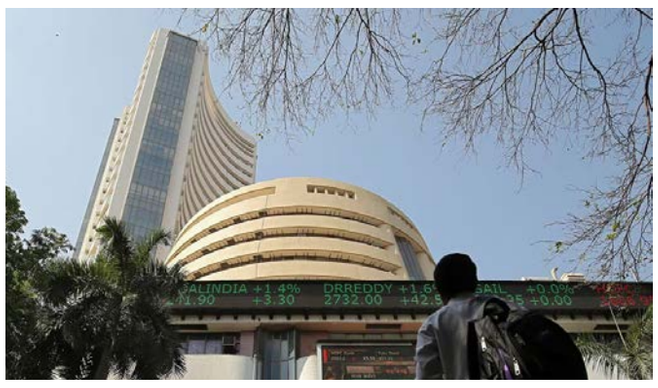
MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

Benchmark Sensex breached the historic 79,000 mark while Nifty scaled the historic 24,000 peak for the first time on Thursday as buying in blue-chip stocks like Infosys, Reliance and TCS helped markets extend gains to the fourth straight day and close at lifetime high levels.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 568.93 points or 0.72 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 79,243.18. During the day, it zoomed 721.78 points or 0.91 per cent to hit the new lifetime peak of 79,396.03.

The Nifty ended at a fresh record high of 24,044.50, rising 175.70 points or 0.74 per cent. Intra-day, it soared 218.65 points or 0.91 per cent to hit the all-time peak of 24,087.45.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, UltraTech Cement jumped over 5 per cent after the country's leading cement maker said it will acquire a 23 per cent stake in its Chennai-based rival India Cements Ltd, in a deal estimated to be around Rs 1,885 crore.



The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 568.93 points **PHOTO: PTI**

Gains in Infosys, TCS and Reliance Industries drove the benchmark indices to record-high levels. NTPC, JSW Steel, Tata Motors, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Tech Mahindra were also among the major gainers. Larsen & Toubro, Sun Pharma, Nestle, HDFC Bank and Maruti were among the laggards.

Analysts said most sectors recorded gains, with IT and energy among the top gainers. Broader indices showed mixed results as midcap index closed in the green while smallcap index lost over half a per cent.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were trading on a mixed note. US markets ended in positive territory on Wednesday.

- Benchmark Sensex breached the historic 79,000 mark while Nifty scaled the historic 24,000 peak for the first time on Thursday as buying in blue-chip stocks like Infosys, Reliance and TCS helped markets extend gains to the fourth straight day and close at lifetime high levels

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,535.43 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.84 per cent to USD 85.97 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark climbed 620.73 points or 0.80 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 78,674.25 on Wednesday. The Nifty went up by 147.50 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at a record closing peak of 23,868.80. —*PTI*

UltraTech to buy 23% stake in India Cements

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

PHOTO: PTI

The country's leading cement maker UltraTech on Thursday said it will acquire a 23 per cent stake in its Chennai-based rival India Cements Ltd, in a deal estimated to be around Rs 1,885 crore.

As part of the transaction, UltraTech Cement will acquire 7.06 crores equity shares of India Cements at a price of up to Rs 267 per share, according to a regulatory filing from the Aditya Birla Group flagship firm.

The Board of company at its meeting held on Thursday approved "making a financial investment to purchase up to 7.06 crores equity shares of India Cements Ltd," the filing said.Calculated on the basis of Rs 267 per share, the transaction value of the acquisition stood at Rs 1,885 crore.UltraTech with an installed capacity of 152.7 Million Tonnes Per Annum (MTPA) of grey cement, is in expansion mode. On 20 April announced the acquisition of a grinding unit from India Cements in Maharashtra for a consideration of Rs 315 crore.

Earlier this week, UltraTech Cement also announced a revision of its offer to acquire 25 per cent in UAE-based RAK Cement Co for White Cement and Construction Materials PSC (RAKWCT).In the last 12 months, UltraTech has expanded its capacity by 18.7 MTPA.UltraTech in April this year had announced a capex of Rs 32,400 crore (nearly USD 4 billion) over the next three years.Meanwhile, India Cements' revenue from operations for the financial year ended on March 31, 2024 was down 8.84 per cent to Rs 5,112.24 crore. It has also reported widening of loss to Rs 227.34 crore, from Rs 126.89 crore in FY23.

—*PTI*

TRADING NORMS ROW

Infosys' CEO settles insider trading case with Sebi, pays ₹25L

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

IT giant Infosys' MD and CEO Salil Parekh has settled with markets regulator Sebi a case pertaining to alleged violation of insider trading norms after paying Rs 25 lakh.

He allegedly failed to put in place "adequate and effective systems" of internal control to ensure compliance for preventing insider trading, according to an order passed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

The case emerged from Sebi's investigation between 29 June, 2020, and 27 September, 2021, in the matter of alleged insider trading in the scrip of Infosys. The regulator probe found that certain information which was Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI) had not been considered as such by Infosys.

Salil Parekh **PHOTO: PTI**

The latest ruling came after Parekh proposed to Sebi to settle the alleged violations "without admitting or denying the findings of fact" through a settlement order.

The case relates to a partnership announcement between Infosys and US-based asset manager Vanguard in July 2020. Under the deal, Infosys was required to provide a cloud-based record keeping platform to Vanguard.

The partnership, between Infosys and Vanguard, considered as an expansion move for the IT firm, fell under the ambit of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI) requiring compliance with insider trading norms. However, the information had not been considered as such by Infosys.Under the insider trading rules, the CEO and MD of a listed company is responsible for putting in place an adequate and effective system of internal control to ensure compliance for preventing insider trading.

In its order, Sebi noted that Salil Parekh was the CEO and MD of Infosys at the time of the announcement of the strategic partnership between Infosys and Vanguard and Sebi's investigation concluded that by not complying with the rule, Parekh allegedly violated insider trading rules. —*PTI*

'Housing sales in April-June rise 5% in top 7 cities; down 8% from Q1'

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Housing sales in Bengaluru stood at 16,360 units in April-June, up 9 per cent from 15,045 units in the year-ago period **PHOTO: PTI**

Housing sales in seven major cities rose 5 per cent annually to about 1.2 lakh units during the April-June period, while demand fell 8 per cent from the preceding quarter on surge in prices, according to Anarock.

Housing sales in Bengaluru stood at 16,360 units in April-June, up 9 per cent from 15,045 units in the year-ago period. But sales fell 8 per cent from the preceding quarter that saw a demand of 17,790 units. In April-June 2024, housing sales across seven major cities are estimated at 1,20,340 units, up 5 per cent from 1,15,090 units in the year-ago period.

However, sales are estimated to have fallen 8 per cent from the January-March quarter that saw sales of 1,30,170 units. Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said, "The quarterly decline seen in housing sales is essential because of the all-time high base considered in the previous quarter when more than 1.30 lakh units were sold. "

"Most importantly, this drop is also due to the significant hike in property prices over the last one year, which in turn has prompted many investors to take a breather," Puri explained.

On an annual basis, Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Bengaluru, Pune, Hyderabad have seen growth in sales, while Chennai and Kolkata witnessed a dip in demand.

However, on a quarter-on-quarter basis, only Delhi-NCR has seen an increase in sales while the remaining six cities witnessed lower demand.

According to the data, housing sales in Delhi-NCR rose 1 per cent to 16,550 units in April-June from 16,450 units in the year-ago period. Sales grew 6 per cent from 15,650 units in the preceding quarter.

—*PTI*

Kenvue sees rural demand uptick, lower input costs

MUMBAI, 27 JUNE

Consumer health focused Kenvue India is witnessing an uptick in rural demand and lower input costs and will invest the benefits from this back into the company to grow the business, a top official has said.

Its managing director Manish Anandani On inflation, said the input prices soared post-Ukraine invasion by Russia and the company opted to take a part of the hit on its profits and passed on some to the consumers. It, however, did not resort to shrinkflation, he made it clear.

"The costs are coming down now, we will invest it back in the business to grow the business," he said.

The investments will largely be in advertising spends, he said, declining to quantify the spends or the percentage increase in them.

Kenvue India has an advertising strategy under which it chooses a digital first approach for the premium range of brands like Aveeno, which are sold through e-commerce platforms or in large stores, he said.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Brands like female hygiene-focused Stayfree are sold across all the segments of the economy, starting from the affluent and down to the middle income and also the aspirational, Anandani said, adding that the company prefers traditional media to advertise such products.

—*PTI*

Emkay launches new AIF; eyes ₹500 cr

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Portfolio management firm Emkay Investment Managers Ltd (EIML) on Thursday announced the launch of an alternative investment fund -- Emkay Capital Builder Fund-- through which it is aiming to mobilise Rs 500 crore in the next six to eight months.

The open-ended category III Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) -- Emkay Capital Builder Fund-- is hoping to generate long-term capital appreciation for investors from a portfolio of equity and equity-related securities. This will be a multi-cap portfolio of around 20-25 stocks.

"Emkay Capital Builder AIF caters to the growing preference for Alternative Investment Funds as an investment avenue amongst UHNIs in India. Our bottom-up stock-picking strategy will help in formulating a winning AIF portfolio backed by the robust E-Qual model to mitigate risks related to management quality," Sachin Shah, Executive Director and Fund Manager, Emkay Investment Managers Ltd, said.

Portfolio management firm Emkay Investment Managers Ltd announced the launch of an alternative investment fund **PHOTO: PTI**

- The open-ended category III Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) -- Emkay Capital Builder Fund-- is hoping to generate long-term capital appreciation for investors from a portfolio of equity and equity-related securities.

In a webinar on opportunities in AIFs, the portfolio management firm said," EIML is aiming to raise Rs 500 crore from the latest AIF in the coming 6 to 8 months".

Earlier, Emkay Investment Managers, the asset management arm of Emkay Global Financial Services, raised over Rs 450 crore with the four previous series of its close-ended AIFs and returned more than Rs 740 crore to the investors before the stipulated time.

—*PTI*

Truecaller, HDFC collab to safeguard users from frauds

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Caller identification app Truecaller on Thursday said it has collaborated with general insurance company HDFC ERGO for an offering that aims to safeguard subscribers against digital communication frauds in India.

Truecaller in a release said that amid rising cases of cyber fraud, the insurance offering underscores its commitment to combating fraud and ensuring user protection through advanced app features - before, during and after mobile communication.A recent report by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre revealed that digital financial frauds accounted for a staggering Rs 1.25 lakh crore over the last three years, the release noted. Announcing the collaboration with HDFC ERGO to offer this insurance for its subscribers, the release said the product will provide coverage up to Rs 10,000 to Android and iOS users across India. —*PTI*

Jio to raise mobile services rates by 12-27% from 3 July

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Jio will increase mobile services rates by 12-27 per cent from 3 July, according to a company statement. This is the first hike in mobile services rates by Jio after a gap of about two-and-a-half years."The introduction of new plans is a step in the direction of furthering industry innovation and driving sustainable growth through investments in 5G and AI technology," Reliance Jio Infocomm Chairman, Akash M Ambani said in the statement. The company has raised mobile services rates across almost all plans. Price of the lowest recharge is being raised to Rs 19, about 27 per cent higher than Rs 15 for 1 GB data add-on-pack. —*PTI*

FIRM REPLIES TO GOVT

25% of hires are married women: Foxconn

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Apple iPhone maker Foxconn has informed the government that 25 per cent of its new hires are married women and its safety protocol, which requires all employees to avoid wearing metal irrespective of gender or religion, is not discriminatory, sources said.

In an informal note shared with the government after reports suggested it is not hiring married women, Foxconn stated that such stipulations are not part of its policy and these claims may have been made by those individuals who were not hired, sources said.They added that such media reports malign the fast-growing Indian manufacturing sector.

Foxconn claimed that media reports that discussing Hindu married women being discriminated was entirely slanted **PHOTO: ANI**

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labour and Employment on Wednesday has sought a detailed report from the Tamil Nadu labour department on the issue of married women not being allowed to work at the Foxconn India Apple iPhone Plant, as reported by the media.

"Foxconn had clarified that 25 per cent of the latest hires are married women. This would mean nearly one-third of the total women are married. This ratio compares favourably to any factory in this sector currently operating in India," one of the sources said. The company has also informed that the discussion around Hindu married women being discriminated against for wearing metals (ornaments and jewelry) is "entirely slanted" and wearing metal in such factories is a safety issue, a fact well recognised by both the industry and the government."Any person wearing metals - man or woman - regardless of their status and their religion are required to remove metals while working in the factory," the source said quoting the company's informal note. —*PTI*

Indians spent 2M hours on video shopping: Flipkart

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

PHOTO: PTI

Homegrown e-commerce platform Flipkart on Thursday said video as a format is rapidly gaining adoption and Indian customers have spent over two million hours on its video commerce offerings in the past one year.

India is one of the top consumers of internet data, and with Indian consumers becoming increasingly tech-savvy and digitally inclined, video commerce in the country promises great potential.

According to Flipkart Indians have spent over two million hours on its video commerce offerings, from June 2023 to May 2024.

The maximum viewership clocked on a single live commerce video was 1.4 million, it added.

"Video as a format is rapidly gaining adoption, especially among women in tier 2 and tier 3 regions, millennials and the Gen Z audience pan India. The top five cities leading the way for Flipkart's Video Commerce engagement are NCR, Bangalore, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Kolkata," the e-commerce major said.

—*PTI*

T20 WORLD CUP

SA march to maiden T20 World Cup final

TAROUBA, 27 JUNE

South Africa exorcised their agonizing semifinal jinx through an exceptional spell of pace bowling as they walloped an emotionally drained Afghanistan by nine wickets to enter their first-ever T20 World Cup final here.

They will face the winners of the second semifinal between India and England in the title clash, but the Afghans will go home with their heads held high after a stirring run in the tournament.

Marco Jansen (3/16) Kagiso Rabada (2/14) and Anrich Nortje (2/7) ripped the soul out of the Afghanistan top-order while bundling them out for a paltry 56 in just 11.5 overs after being invited to bowl.

Reeza Hendricks (29 not out), who put up his highest score in this event, and skipper Aiden Markram (23 not out) navigated them safely to the shores of victory as they finally freed themselves from the painful tag of chokers in global events. Afghanistan has given their everything to reach the World Cup semifinal, and in the crucial clash, they were left with no energy and produced a nothing effort that belied their doughtiness until now. It affected their batting as they looked unusually edgy against the South African pacers, who summoned a spell from hell. They reduced the Afghans to 28 for five inside the Powerplay and there was no coming back from that depth as they crashed to their lowest total in a T20 International.

Tabraiz Shamsi picked up 3 quick wickets
PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP

South Africa's Aiden Markram and Reeza Hendricks celebrate after beating Afghanistan
PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP

- South Africa exorcised their agonizing semifinal jinx through an exceptional spell of pace bowling as they walloped an emotionally drained Afghanistan by nine wickets to enter their first-ever T20 World Cup final here.

Their 56 was also the lowest total in a T20 World Cup semifinal clash. Once reduced to 28 for six, Afghanistan could not offer a smidgeon of the fight as their dream of reaching a maiden World Cup final was squashed even before it began.

While the South African pacers were on the money, the Afghan batters too should cope with some blame for being edgy on a pitch that hid no evils apart from those deliveries that kicked up from a length. *—PTI*

Jonathan Trott
PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP

Trott slams s/f pitch

Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott has slammed the pitch that was used in Trinidad for the South Africa vs Afghanistan match, claiming that it was not fit to host a T20 World Cup semi-final. Afghanistan were on the receiving end of a drubbing from the Proteas as they were bundled out for just 56 runs, the lowest total ever by a side in a T20 World Cup semi-final. —AP

PHOTO: PTI

SL head coach Chris Silverwood steps down

COLOMBO, 27 JUNE

Sri Lanka's head coach Chris Silverwood on Thursday stepped down from the role following the team's dismal outing in the ongoing T20 World Cup, the SLC announced. Former captain Mahela Jayawardene had resigned from the post of the consultant coach on Wednesday."Being an international coach means long periods away from loved ones. After lengthy conversations with my family and with a heavy heart, I feel it is now time for me to return home (England) and spend some quality time together," Silverwood, who played six Tests and seven ODIs for England as a pacer.—*AP*

Agarwal, Aadya enter s/fs of Asian Junior Squash

ISLAMABAD, 27 JUNE

S India's Shiven Agarwal, Aadya Budhia, and Gowshika M moved into the semifinals of their respective age groups at the 31st Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships here on Thursday. It was, however, a mixed day for the Indians. The second-seeded Agarwal beat local challenger Abdul 11-4, 11-7, 11-5 in the boys' U-15 quarterfinals, while Aadya and Gowshika, the second and fourth seeds in the girls' U-13 section.—*AP*

PHOTO: @ANDYMURRAY

Murray still has not decided whether to play

PARIS, 27 JUNE

Two-time Wimbledon champion Andy Murray still had not decided as of Thursday whether he will be able to compete at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament that begins next week but his management company said "he is working towards that." The 37-year-old Murray has indicated this is likely to be his last season on tour before retirement. He has been dealing with a series of injuries in 2024 and had a surgical procedure on his back over the weekend after stopping during a match at a tuneup event. "Andy is recovering well from his surgery and has started training again," Murray's representatives said in a statement issued on Thursday. "At this stage, it is too soon to confirm for definite whether he will play Wimbledon, but he is working towards that and a final decision will be made as late as possible to give him the best chance of competing."—*AP*

Kvaratskhelia's Georgia upsets Ronaldo's Portugal 2-0

Turkiye edges into last 16 with tense 2-1 win over Czechia

GELSENKIRCHEN, 27 JUNE

A pre-game chat with Cristiano Ronaldo inspired Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Georgia to one of the biggest upsets in European Championship history, beating Portugal 2-0 and advancing to the last 16.

Georgia's No. 7 has admired Ronaldo for years and had spoken before the game about how much he wanted his hero's shirt. He got it, along with a goal and a slice of soccer history, on a frustrating night for Ronaldo and Portugal.

For Napoli forward Kvaratskhelia, the win even surpasses his club's historic Italian title last year.

"This is the best day in my life because it was more difficult to do it with the Georgian team than with Napoli," he said.

A banner at the Georgian fans' end of the stadium said "Believe," and they did.

The Georgians needed a win to reach the knockout stage at Euro 2024 and got their opening goal after only 93 seconds. Georges Mikautadze intercepted a poor pass and set up Kvaratskelia to score with a low shot.

Georgia advanced in its debut at a major tournament as one of the best third-place teams. Portugal had already qualified from Group F after winning its first two games.

The Georgians will next face Spain on Sunday in Cologne, while Portugal plays Slovenia on Monday in Frankfurt. Slovenia is another defense-first team and it upset Portugal 2-0 in a March friendly.

Ronaldo is still without a goal at Euro 2024. He felt he deserved a penalty in the first half and kicked away a water bottle when he was substituted in the 66th minute.

Georgia's forward #07 Khvicha Kvaratskhelia celebrates scoring his team's first goal
PHOTO: X / @EURO2024

Turkiye's Hakan Calhanoglu celebrates after scoring the opening goal during a Group F match between Czechia and Turkiye. *PHOTO: X / @EURO2024*

Turkiye edges into last 16 with tense 2-1 win over Czechia

Turkiye overcame stiff resistance from 10-man Czechia in a 2-1 win on Wednesday with goals from Hakan Calhanoglu and Cenk Tosun to set up a Euro 2024 last-16 clash with Austria and send its opponents home.

The Czechs, quarter-finalist at the last tournament, needed victory to stand any chance of advancing, but the 20th-minute dismissal of midfielder Antonin Barak for a harsh second yellow card hit them hard. In a chaotic end to the game, Czechia's Tomas Chory was also given a red card in a melee at the final whistle.

The referee showed 18 cards in total, two red and 16 yellow, to set a new Euros record.Both teams pressed hard from the start in a raucous atmosphere on a hot night, Turkish fans marching to the game and outnumbering the Czechs thanks to their huge diaspora in Germany.

Tosun struck Turkiye's winner in stoppage time, sparking wild scenes on his bench and among Turkish fans. The result banished the Turks' dark memories of Euro 2020 where they went home after conceding eight goals in three defeats. *—AP*

WOMEN'S ONE-OFF TEST

India Women's vice-captain Smriti Mandhana and Priya Punia during a practice session
PHOTO: PTI

Debutants in focus as India women take on SA in Test

CHENNAI, 27 JUNE

The focus will be on young talent, especially the debutantes, when the Indian women's cricket team squares off against South Africa in a one-off Test starting here on Friday, a decade after the two teams last clashed in a five-day game. With Test cricket not being a regular affair for women, as many as five in the Indian squad could get a debut in the longest format, after having established themselves and proved their mettle in the limited-overs circuit.

Also, with India coming off a 3-0 clean sweep in the preceding ODI series against the same side, the momentum is surely with the hosts although this will be a different format altogether.

The likes of Uma Chetry, Priya Punia, Saika Ishaque, Arundhati Reddy, and Shabnam Shakil will be the ones to watch as they prepare for their Test debut.

The last time India competed in a red-ball match was December 2023, which was their first Test outing in two years. Playing back-to-back home Tests against England and Australia (one each), the hosts were successful in both instances. the Indians last played South Africa in a Test back in 2014 in Mysore, winning it by a comprehensive innings and 34-run margin. **India vs SA Match starts: 9.30 am (IST)** *—PTI*

Ecuador beats Jamaica 3-1 for first CA win since 2016

LAS VEGAS, 27 JUNE

Seventeen-year-old Kendry Páez scored in first-half stoppage time, Alan Minda added another goal late in the second half and Ecuador beat winless Jamaica 3-1 on Wednesday night in the Copa America. Ecuador, which rebounded from a 2-1 loss to Venezuela, won its first Copa America game since a 4-0 victory over Haiti in 2016, stopping an eight-game winless streak. Jamaica became the first team eliminated from the 16-nation tournament when Venezuela beat Mexico 1-0 later Wednesday.

Kasey Palmer's 13th-minute own goal put Ecuador ahead and Páez made it 2-0 with a penalty kick in the fourth minute of first-half stoppage time. Michail Antonio scored Jamaica's first Copa America goal in the 54th, and Minda got the final goal in the first minute of second-half stoppage time. Venezuela has six points and clinched a quarterfinal berth, while Mexico and Ecuador have three points each. On Sunday, Ecuador closes Group B against Mexico at Glendale, Arizona, when Jamaica faces Venezuela. *—AP*

DP Manu *PHOTO: PTI*

Bumrah is 1,000 times better than me: Kapil

NEW DELHI, 27 JUNE

Iconic former India all-rounder Kapil Dev feels Jasprit Bumrah is a "1000 times better" bowler than he was at his prime. Bumrah, who has been doing exceptionally well in the ongoing T20 World Cup, snaring 11 wickets at an outstanding economy of 4.08 in the 23 overs he has bowled so far. "Bumrah is 1000 times better than me. These young boys are far better than us. We had more experience. They are better," Kapil told 'PTI Videos'.

Bumrah, who is widely regarded as the best pacer in international cricket now, has played 26 Tests for India, picking up 159 wickets and an economy of under three. His 89 ODI appearances have yielded 149 wickets while his T20I wicket count stands at 85 from 68 matches. *—PTI*

Kapil Dev *PHOTO: PTI*

Tvesa leads Indian challenge in Swiss Open

HOLZHAUSERN, 27 MAY

Olympic-bound Diksha Dagar has taken a break from this week's Swiss Open but there are five other Indians in the fray, led by the experienced Tvesa Malik, who is back in form. Tvesa, the top Indian last week at the Czech Ladies Open, will have Vani Kapoor, Amandeep Drall, Ridhima Dilawari, and Seher Atwal for company. Apart from Diksha, the other top Indian player taking a week off is Pranavi Urs.

Diksha said she had a fever and a stiff neck while playing Czech Ladies and hence decided to take a break from the event. She used the rest to quickly visit Paris to look at Le National, where the Olympic golf competition will happen in early August. *—PTI*

MLA and Karnataka State Football Association President NA Haris addressing a press conference on 'Chief Ministers Cup' at Bengaluru Football Stadium, in Bengaluru
PHOTO: PTI

PARIS OLYMPICS

Kiran secures surprise Olympic berth in women's 400m

PANCHKULA, 27 JUNE

Unheralded Haryana athlete Kiran Pahal, on Thursday, surprised herself by qualifying for the Paris Olympics in the women's 400m event, clocking a personal best time of 50.92 seconds on the opening day of the National Inter-State Championships here.

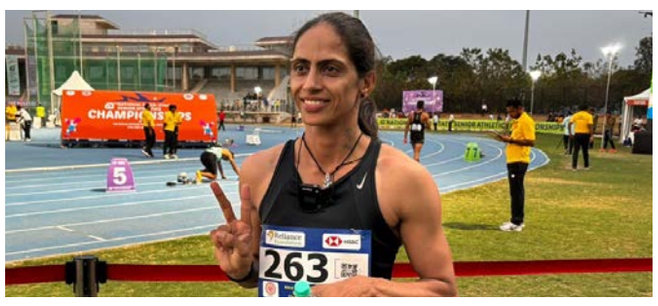
The automatic Olympics qualification mark in women's 400m is 50.95 seconds, which the 23-year-old Kiran managed to breach to secure her berth at next month's Games.

She easily won her semifinal heat, finishing ahead of Devy Aniba Zala of Gujarat, who was a distant second with a timing of 53.44, while Kerala's Sneha K came third by clocking 53.51s.

She had clocked a fast time of 52.33 seconds in the preliminary round heats earlier in the day. Her earlier personal best was 51.84 seconds which she had recorded in 2022.

"It's a surprise for me. I never thought I would qualify for the Olympics and prepare for it. There is no bigger achievement than this," Kiran said after her feat.

"I was under a bit of pressure in the preliminary heats as I was running after around one year. I knew that if I do well in heats, I will do better in the semifinals because you get better runners in the semifinals."



Kiran Pahal *PHOTO: PTI*

- Unheralded Haryana athlete Kiran Pahal, on Thursday, surprised herself by qualifying for the Paris Olympics in the women's 400m event, clocking a personal best time of 50.92 seconds on the opening day of the National Inter-State Championships here.

Asked if she will go for the national record time of 50.79 seconds in the final to be held on Friday, she said, "I don't want to say this beforehand but I feel I can run faster in the final than in the semifinals."

The women's 400m national record stands in the name of Hima Das since 2018.

Kiran, who trains in Rohtak outside the national camp, was running in her first race of the year and she said she was not still fully fit after suffering multiple hamstrings. Her last 400m race was at the National Open Championships in October 2023 in Bengaluru where she clocked a disappointing 56.03s to crash out at the preliminary heats.

—PTI